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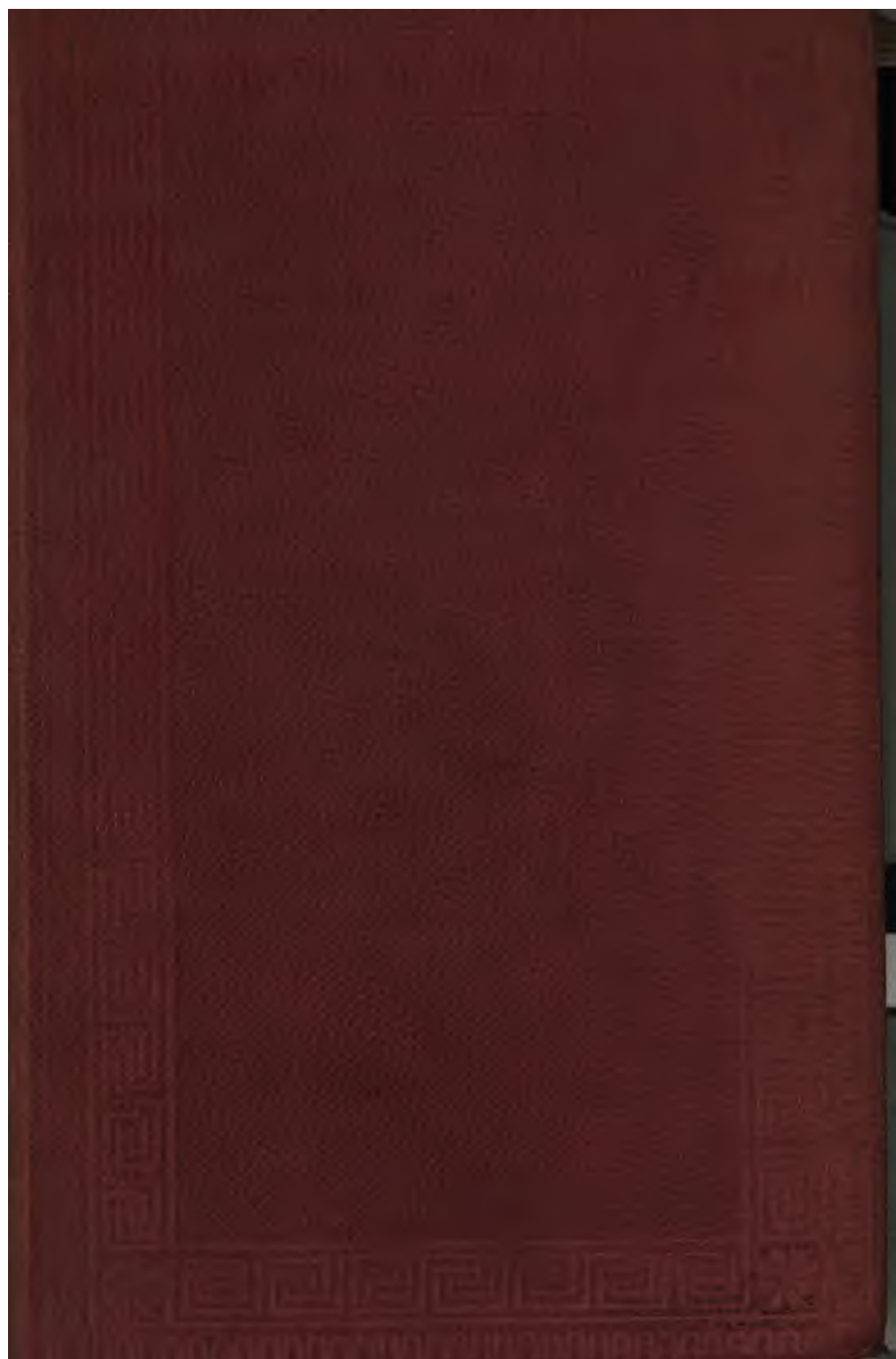
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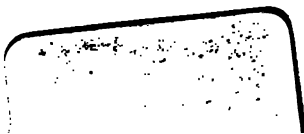
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ST. GEORGE'S HALL,  
LANGHAM PLACE.

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UNDER THE IMMEDIATE PATRONAGE OF  
HER ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCESS TECK.

The Rt. Hon. the Countess SPENCER.	The Rt. Hon. the Countess LICHFIELD.
The Rt. Hon. the Countess DENRIG.	The Rt. Hon. Lady LOUISA LEGGE.
The Rt. Hon. Lady ISABELLA SCHUYTER.	The Rt. Hon. Lady CAROLINE PRATT.
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The Hon. Mrs. ELLIOT.	Mrs. EDWARD BARING,

and Madame VAN DE Weyer.

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AT THE ABOVE HALL,

ON THURSDAY EVENINGS,

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MARCH 24th.

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JUNE 30th.

1870.

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TREBLE AND BARITONE CONCERTINAS AND SOLO VIOLA :

MR. RICHARD BLAGROVE.

—Railways, postages—in a word, all the numerous facilities of the age—have almost annihilated distance, and, as a natural result, caused an individual trade between country customers and London establishments. Those who do not visit town, so as to select and purchase directly, send for patterns from which they can give their orders. But as all apparent advantages on the one hand have more or less their corresponding drawbacks, so this system is not without its bane. Pushing tradesmen make a market by offering goods at lower rates than they can possibly be sold at to realise a fair profit. The bait traps the unreflective, and the result is that the receipts *en masse* are not equal to the tempting samples. There is no new invention in this; it has been practised in wholesale merchandise and by candidates for contracts, as the proverb hath it, since there were hills and valleys. But we grieve to add it is sometimes resorted to by those whom one would credit for more integrity. Ladies, therefore, need exercise caution, and place confidence only in houses of old-established fame, for rapidly-made businesses are not generally reliable. And to what does this assertion amount more than to the fact that nothing great can be effected not only without labour but without time, and that Rome was not built, as the old saying says, in a day? Messrs. Jay, of Regent-street, whose name is well known amongst the few on the list of *bonâ fide* establishments in the metropolis, have adopted a plan for assisting country ladies in choosing for themselves London fashions and fabrics. And their customers may rest assured that they will thus be enabled to obtain goods of every quality, both low and high priced, at the most reasonable terms—that is, the terms of small profits for quick returns—and that they may firmly rely upon the thoroughly corresponding character of samples and supplies.—From the *Court Journal*.

# Caught in a Trap.

A NOVEL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

JOHN C. HUTCHESON,

Author of "The Pettyshams," &c.



VOL. I.

London:

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# CAUGHT IN A TRAP.

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## CHAPTER I.

### AMONGST THE PLUNGERS.

“HULLO! Markworth. How lucky! Why you are just the man I want; you’re ubiquitous, who’d have thought of seeing you in town?” said Tom Hartshorne, of the —th Dragoons, cheerily, as he sauntered late one summer afternoon into a private billiard-room in Oxford-street, where a tall, dark-complexioned, and strikingly-handsome man,

was knocking the balls about in his shirt-sleeves, and trying all sorts of fancy shots against the cushions—The sole occupant of the room was he, with the exception of the marker, who was looking on in a desultory sort of way at the strokes of the player from his throne-like chair underneath the scoring board.

“Hullo! Tom, by all that’s holy! And what brings you to Babylon? I left Boulogne last week, and ran up to see what the ‘boys’ were after; so here I am, quite at your service. What can I do for you, Tom? Are you hard up, in a row, or run away with your neighbour’s wife? Unbesom yourself, *caro mio*.”

“No, I’m all right, old chap; but nothing could be better. By Jove! it’s the very thing!”

“Who? Why? What? Enlighten me, Tom.”

"Well, you see, Markworth, I've got to go down to-morrow for my annual week to my mother's place in Sussex. It will be so awfully slow; just fancy, old chap, a whole week in that dreary old country house, with no company, no shooting, no fishing, no anything! Why, it's enough to kill a fellow!"

"Poor Tom," observed Markworth, sympathisingly.


"Yes; but that's not the worst either, old chap. My mother is very cranky, you know, and the house itself is as dull as ditch-water. You have to go to bed and get up by clock-work; and if one should be late at dinner, or in turning in, why, it is thought more of by the ruling powers than the worst sin in the decalogue. Besides, I have to keep straight and humour the old lady—for I am quite dependent on her until I come of age;

and, though she's very fond of me in her sort of way, she cuts up rough sometimes, and would stop supplies in a moment if I should offend her."

"Dutiful infant ! I pity your sorrows, Tom ; but what can I do to help you?"

"I'm just coming to that ; but we may as well have a game by the way, while we're talking."

"Certainly ; how many points shall I give you ? The usual number, eh ? Score up, fifteen to spot, marker," he said, turning to the little man, who, with a face of dull impassiveness, was sitting bolt upright, like Neptune with his trident, holding the billiard-rest in a perpendicular position, apparently hearing nothing, although his eyes twinkled every now and then. "You lead, Tom, of course."



"All right, here goes; but, to return to what we were speaking about. You can help me very much, Markworth."

"Can I? That's a good cannon, you mustn't play all through like that, Tom, or you'll beat me easily; but, go on, and tell me what you want."

"Ha! yes—you see I've got one saving clause in my predicament. My mother says I may bring some one down with me, and I don't know who the deuce to take—for any of our fellows would ruin me in half a day with the old lady, by talking slang, or flirting with the maids, or something else."

"And you want me to go and victimise myself for a week? Much obliged, I'm sure."

"Nonsense, Markworth. By Jove! that's a ripping hazard in the middle pocket; you've

---



got the red in baulk, too, and the game's all in your hands. You are really the only fellow I'd ask, and it would be a perfect god-send to have you. It won't be so dull for the two of us together, and I'm sure you'll be able to pull me out of many a scrape with the old lady, for she's just your sort, and you can tackle her like one o'clock ; only talk to her about the ' Ologies ' old country families, and the peerage, and you'll be all right. She never speaks of anything else. Besides, there's a Miss Kingscott down there—a governess, or companion, or something of the sort to my sister—whom I've never yet seen, as she only came there this year. I daresay you can make love to her."

"Thank you, especially after the warning about the maids!"

"But you'll come, won't you?"

"I can't promise, Tom. There, that stroke ends the game; let's finish billiards: they're too slow. What are you going to do to-night, Tom?"

"A lot of us are going to have a quiet little dinner party at Lane's. The old colonel has been awfully jolly, and let away nearly the whole squad on leave together. Will you come? There'll be Harrowby, Miles—in fact all the boys. We'll have lansquenette afterwards, and then you and I can talk over about running down to the country. Do come, there's a good fellow."

"Well, I will; what time do you dine?"

"Sharp seven; so don't be late."

"I'll be there. Ta-ta, now, for I've got a lot of letters to write. I'm stopping at the 'Tavistock' by the way, in case I don't turn up and you want to find me."

They had emerged from the billiard-room, and now stood in the street.

“ But you must come, I shall expect you and will take no excuse. I’m going to call on some jolly girls whom I met at the Woolwich hop last night. So good-bye till seven—sharp, mind !”

“ All right,” answered the other, as Tom Hartshorne hailed a hansom, and was quickly whirled off to his destination in Bruton Street, where the Miss Inskips, two pretty and fast young ladies of the period, dwelt with their mamma, a widowed dame.

Allynne Markworth was not so much a type, as a specimen, of a curious class of men constantly to be met with in London society, and of whom society knows next to nothing. No one knew where he came from, who were his progenitors, or what he did; and yet he

suffered in no respect from this self-same ignorance of the world around him, in which he lived and moved and had his being, as any other of its more regular units.

He always dressed well, lived well, and seemed to have a fair share of the loaves and fishes which Providence often so unequally bestows. Having the *entrée* of good houses, he knew "everybody," and everybody knew him ; but if you asked any of the men who knew him, and were constantly meeting him about, who Markworth was, the general answer you would get would be, "'Pon my soul, I don't know." Perhaps Tom Harts-horne knew more about him and was more intimate with him than anyone else, but even he had long ceased to puzzle his budding brains over any analysis of his friend : he was a "good fellow," and "a clever fellow,

by Jove," and that was enough for him. Tom, however, never dreamt of calling Markworth by his Christian name, and no one else could have approached that phase of intimacy.

To tell the truth Allynne Markworth lived by his wits. He was a *Chevalier d'Industrie* in a certain sense of the term, although in a slightly more moral degree; and ran the race set before him by preying on the weaknesses, follies, and ignorances of human nature in the abstract, as evinced amongst his fellows in the concrete.


He was a good billiard player, and knew as well when to hide his play as "any other man." Many a stray sovereign did he pick up in lives after pool at Phillipps', even when he could not get a bet on, which he was never loth to take. The Hanover Square Club ac-

knowledge<sup>d</sup> his sup<sup>re</sup>macy at whist, and happy was he who was his partner when guinea points were the rule. Being a good judge of horseflesh, he of course kept a book on the principal events of the year: rare in "hedging" he was seldom known to come out a loser.

With all these little strings to his bow, it is no wonder that Markworth managed to get along pretty comfortably; and although he toiled not nor yet did he spin, I much question whether King Solomon if clad *en regle* to the nineteenth century would have been better dressed, taking Poole as a criterion. Add to this that Allynne Markworth was a well-bred, handsome man of thirty to thirty-five—although his right age would have been rather hard to discover—and had a certain plausibility of manner which prevented one

at first from noticing the somewhat sinister expression about his eyes and mouth ; and the surprising thing would have been that he did *not* get on. Generally he had plenty of money ; and when he had not he absented himself from society until his coffers were replenished in some secret way or other.

At this time, however, he had been for some months undergoing a run of ill-luck. The year had opened badly by the failure of a bubble company in which he was deeply interested ; then, again, men were fighting shy of him at billiards, and it cost him more work for a sovereign than it was worth, and guinea points at whist were becoming rare events even amongst the most reckless *habitues* of the club ; to climax his misfortunes, he had made a very losing book on the Derby, and although he paid it up—for to be a defaulter



would have ruined him in his set—he had to leave London early in the season in consequence of not having the where-withal to prosecute the war.

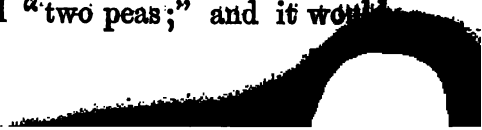
When he had gone away at the end of May he told Tom Hartshorne that he would be detained away on the continent on business for months; and yet here he was back again before the end of July. The fact was he came back money-hunting, and was so pressed now that he hardly knew where to turn. He had made up his mind that unless he married a fortune, discovered a gold mine, or tumbled into some wonderful luck, that his “little game,” as he expressed it, would be “all up.” He was glad to meet Tom Hartshorne so very opportunely at the present juncture, for he thought that he might be put in the way of some plan for changing events—and at the



worst a little good card playing in the evening might place him in the position of being able "to look about him."


Punctually at seven o'clock he showed himself up at Lane's Hotel, where some half-a-dozen men of Tom's regiment were assembled in a cosy little room upstairs, well lighted, and with snow-white-cloth-covered-table, all duly prepared and laid out for the contemplated feast.

Dragoon officers or "Plungers"—indeed, all cavalry men—are pretty much alike, and unlike the remainder of the Army List. The mild, "gushing" cornet, dashing "sub," and massive captain, full-fledged and silky as to hair and drooping moustache—not forgetting general apathy of expression—of one troop, or regiment, resemble those of another, even as the proverbial "two peas;" and it would



sorely tax one's powers of diagnosis to discriminate between the members of a party like those assembled for the present "quiet little dinner, you know."

Tom Hartshorne—no one who ever spoke two words with him could call him anything else but "Tom"—was the only exception to this rule; the others were all men of a class, "classy," without any distinctive individuality. He, however, was of a different stamp. Of middle-height, thick-set, fair-haired, and open face—Saxon all over—his was the native mould, thorough British metal, that makes our strong and plucky athletes of the Isis and the Cam, who struggle each year for aquatic supremacy, like the strong *Gyas fortisque Cloanthus* of Virgil's *Æneid*—that long line of heroes celebrated for every deed of daring, from Richard the "Lion-hearted" down to the last



gallant recipient of the Victoria Cross : men of which stamp, thank God, live yet among us !

A thorough gentleman, his nature was as open as the day, which you could readily see for yourself by one glance into his truthful face, and clear blue eyes, although perhaps concealed partly by that slight upper-crust or veneer of egotism and affectation, which generally hides the better qualities of young men on first entering into life, and just released from their " mother's apron string " and the trammels of home and school.

Tom Hartshorne was little more than nineteen, and it was a wonder, with his bringing up, that he was what he was ; but nothing could altogether taint the sterling stuff of which he was composed. He was one who could pass through the lighter follies of

military life unscathed, and only wanted some strong impetus, some ardent motive to bring him out in his true colours. Tom Hartshorne had made the acquaintance of Markworth about a year previous to the meeting with which the story opens—in fact just after he had been gazetted to his cornetcy, and had taken to him at once—and Markworth had apparently taken to him, a sort of chemical affinity of opposing forces.

It may be thought strange that natures so dissimilar should agree, but so it was. The Latin proverb is often curiously wrong; instead of *similes similibus curantur*, the præfix *dis* should be added, and then the axiom would be complete. When Tom first met Markworth, who had received an invitation to the mess of the —th, he was struck with him, and on introduction came to like him greatly,

for he was so clever, so agreeable, so different to the men he had previously met that he could not fail to be impressed; you always find young men take to a man of the world, particularly if he be like such a man as Markworth was.

The little dinner at Lane's passed off well, and the young Plungers enjoyed themselves to their heart's core, now that they were not under the jaundiced eye of their stern major, who envied them all their strong digestions and perfect livers; and, it is to be feared, they drank a little more champagne than was good for some of them. At the table Markworth was placed alongside a brother sub of Tom's, who was most communicative over his wine, talking in a low confidential voice with his elder companion, whom he wished to convince of his "manishness," of horses,

dogs, and women, as befitted a noble young soldier.

During a pause in the conversation Markworth thought he might gain some information, and having an opportunity of putting in a word, asked—

“By the way, do you know any of Tom’s people?”

“Know them? By Jove! yes. Catch me there again, that’s all!”

“Why—how—what’s the matter?” asked Markworth. “I though everybody liked Tom?”

“So they do; he’s a brick. But Tom ain’t his mother and his sister.”

“Certainly not,” answered the other, agreeing with the indisputable fact; “but what of them?”

“Well, the fact is Tom asked me down

there last Christmas, and I never spent such a time in my life. They are very well connected, but see no people at all. The mother is a regular Tartar. There is also a sort of half idiot sister older than Tom. She has a pile of money left her, by the way ; not a bad chance for any one in search of an heiress, who doesn't care about beauty and brains, and that sort of thing !''

“ The devil she has ? ”

“ Yes, by Jove ! a regular pot of money ; twenty thou' or more, I'm told. There's no elder son and nobody else, so Tom will inherit all the property when the old lady hooks it. There you have the family. I stopped with them two days, but it nearly killed me. Men of the world like us, you know, can't stand that sort of thing. Of course I had to plead regimental business, and

get away. I remember the old lady—a regular she cat by Jove!—saying that she hoped my mamma—curse her impudence—would teach me better manners before she let me go out again. Did you ever hear of such a thing?”

“Ha! ha! ha! a pleasant old lady, Harrowby; I do not wonder at your dignity being hurt. I must look out for her if I ever tackle her.”

“What, are you thinking of going down? Take my advice, don’t: you’ll be sick of it.”

“Yes, I may. . Tom asked me, and perhaps I’ll see some fun,” responded Markworth—and there the conversation dropped.

Later on, when he wished Tom Hartshorne “good-night,” in reply to his repeated invitation, he promised to go.

“And we’ll start on Friday,” said Tom,



gleefully ; "that will be the day after to-morrow, you know."

"All right, I'm your man. Call for me at the 'Tavistock' at twelve, and we can start as soon after as you like."

"Done. That will just give us time to catch the 2.30 train. Good-night, old fellow!"

And they parted.

The next morning Mr. Allynne Markworth took a solitary walk citywards. After passing through Temple Bar and the then—undesolated—Fleet Street, he ascended the hill of Ludgate; and turning into a thin row of straggling and seedy old buildings, found himself within the precincts of Doctor's Commons, sacred to the archives of marriage—one cannot always say love—and death!

Here, having previously invested the sum

of one shilling in current coin of the realm, he received permission to examine the "Last will and testament of one Roger Hartshorne, deceased, of the county of Sussex, gentleman," the perusal of which document appeared to give him much ~~internal~~ satisfaction. His task did not take him long, and he was soon retracing his steps.

On the day after he went down to Sussex, as agreed, with Tom Hartshorne.

## CHAPTER II.

## THE SUSSEX DOWAGER.

ONLY a simple, and yet special name and  
appellation—

“Mrs. Hartshorne,

“The Poplars.”

That is all.

Nothing much in the name certainly, at  
first sight, nor yet such a very extraordinary  
address, either in the nomenclature of the

mansion, or in its surroundings ; but the two taken together were something entirely out of the common. Mrs. Hartshorne by herself, or the Poplars, considered merely as a residence, were neither of them grand or startling phenomena ; but one could not well do without the other, and the dual in unity formed a complete and unique integrity. In other words, "Mrs. Hartshorne, of the Poplars," was an "institution" in the land, to quote an Americanism, although neither a thing of beauty nor a joy for ever. She was a *rara avis in terris*, a millionaire Hecate, a rich and slightly-over-middle-aged eccentric, a Xantipical Croesus—no less a personage, in fact, than the "Sussex Dowager."

Far and wide throughout this county—over a considerable portion of which she owned manorial rights of vassalage, and ruled

with sovereign sway in the matter of leases and titheholds and rackrents,—amongst the lesser farmers and villagers she was known by this title; although, it must be confessed, her more intimate dependants and rustic neighbours dubbed her by far less elegant sobriquets.

Any one meeting her about the country lanes, where she was to be found at all hours, would have taken Mrs. Hartshorne to be a shabby little dried-up, poor old woman. She always dressed in dark grey garments of antediluvian cut, somewhat brown and rusty from age and wear. Her bonnet was a marvellous specimen of the hideous old coal-scuttle form used by our grandmothers. She always carried a reticule of similar date, which, by her demeanour when emporting it, might have contained a hundred death-warrants,

or keys of dungeons—if she had lived some three centuries or so ago: a bulgy umbrella in all weathers, wet or fine: thick shoes of rough country make: dark woollen gloves; and no veil to disguise the thin sharp features and piercing bead-like black eyes, over-hung with bushy grey eyebrows, and the wrinkled forehead above, covered with scanty white locks, braided puritanically on each side, and there you have Mrs. Hartshorne.

She was not a handsome old woman, nor a prepossessing old woman, nor would her face impress you as being either benevolent or pious; but shrewdness, cleverness, and hardness of set purpose, were ingrained in every line of its expression; and in truth—she was a hard, shrewd, clever old woman.

A quarter of a century seems a somewhat long time to look back, but twenty-five years

ago Mrs. Hartshorne was a young and handsome woman. Time had not dealt kindly with her as he does to some: none would dream of calling hers a graceful or a winning old age. She seemed to wrestle with the Destroyer, instead of ignoring his approach as most of us do, and quietly and placidly submitting to his encroachments. The result was not to her advantage. Every line on her face, every crow's-foot in the corners of her twinkling little eyes, every wrinkle on her careworn brow, every silvery hair on her head, marked the issue of some unsuccessful struggle; and the strong passions of her nature, even as they had embittered her life, seemed now, when her youth was passed, to war with death.

She had a quick way of speaking, running her words and sentences into one another, so

that they resembled one of those compound, Dutch jaw-breaking words that occupy several lines in extent, and almost fill up a paragraph. Her temper was not a sweet one. It might suit "namby pamby," milk-and-water, bread-and-butter girls—"hussies," she would have called them—to mince their words and moderate their utterances; but she, "thank God, was none of those!" She said what she meant, sharp and straight to the point, and did not care what any one thought about it. Her voice, mode of speech, and general manner, resembled the barking of a wiry little Scotch terrier, and terrified most with whom she had any dealings. "Good Lord!" as old Doctor Jolly, the most hearty, jovial, loud and cheery-voiced of country surgeons—the only visitor who had entrance within her gates, and who used at fixed intervals to beard the lioness in



her den—used to say ; “but she has a temper. I would not be her husband, or her son, or her daughter for something! God bless my soul! sir, but she could hold a candle to the devil himself.” And so she could, and hold her own, too!

Old Roger Hartshorne—the “squire”—had married her late in life some twenty-five years ago, and brought her home to the Poplars in all state and ceremony as befitted the lady of so great a landowner. The old squire was a very good-natured, liberal sort of man, whose only amusement was in following the harriers—there were no hounds and scarlet-coated foxhunters in those parts—and he was generally liked throughout the county, for he kept a sort of open house, and was hail-fellow-well-met with everyone; but when he married—and no one knew where he picked up his wife,

people said that *she* married him—all this was changed. A new *regime* was instituted, and the sporting breakfasts, and hunting dinners, and open-house festivities at the Poplars became as a thing of the past. Mrs. Hartshorne said she would not have any such “scandalous goings on” in her house: she wasn’t going to be “eaten out of house and home.” Every expense of the *ménage* was cut down. Instead of some seven or eight grooms and gardeners and domestic servants, only three were retained—an old woman to mind the house, an old butler, whom the squire insisted on keeping, and a groom and gardener, who combined both situations in one. When the children came—a girl and a boy—the squire thought things would be altered; but they were not. Mrs. Hartshorne said they must save, and pinch and pinch more now

for them—although goodness knows the estate was rich enough; and shortly after the birth of Tom, the old squire died, worn out it was said by the temper and treatment of his wife. It was, perhaps, a happy release to Roger of that ilk, for the poor old gentleman had been sadly changed since his marriage, and used to look a piteous spectacle when he took his solitary rides around the village lanes on his old cob, the sole relict of his handsome stud which he had been proudly fond of displaying across country.

With the death of the squire, Mrs. Harts-horne became more saving and pinching, and miserly than ever. The first thing she did was to dismiss the old butler, who had been in the family for some forty years, saying she “could not afford to support a lazy, useless pauper;” the next was to tell the bailiff and

estate agent that their services were no longer required, for "she would have no curious eyes prying into her property, and telling everyone how much she was worth." The house was almost shut up and buried in seclusion, and no one but Doctor Jolly ever went there. *He* said he "would not be denied by any woman in creation," and although the "dowager," as she now came to be termed, used to put on her most vinegar-like expression for him, and address him in the snappiest and most provoking and insulting manner, he would call at the Poplars at least once a month in obedience to the promise he had given to the old squire on his death-bed to "look after his poor children." It must be said that Mrs. Hartshorne tolerated the doctor in a sort of way—her way ; and if she liked anyone, liked him who was a favourite with the whole

county round. She had said to him when he first used to come, that she supposed he "came there because he might charge for his visits, and get something by it;" but when she found this was not the case, and that Doctor Jolly had no base intentions towards her money bags, she tolerated him, and allowed him to come and go as he pleased, without bestowing on him more than her customary amount of sweet temper.

When Tom grew old enough he was sent to school, only coming home for one week every year by express stipulation with the proprietor of the school ! and when he became eighteen, at his earnest wish, and after continual wranglings with the old lady—who was passionately fond of him, although at the same time possessing an inordinate affection for money—he was allowed to go into

the army. His mother said that he would "ruin her" when she gave an order on her banker to the doctor, who was Tom's guardian, for the sum required for his commission and outfit, but she did not behave illiberally, and gave master Tom a very fair allowance, satisfying her conscience by raising all the rents of her poorer tenants, and grinding down the household expenses more than ever. Of Tom she was not only fond but proud: it was the only one womanly trait in her character; and although she was not a very motherly kind of woman, and did not display her affection in the manner customary to the feminine sex—ruling her household, even Tom, with a rod of iron and a stern sense of duty—yet her son was very much attached to her, notwithstanding he did not exhibit any strong partiality for visiting her. He knew that the

less he saw of her the better: they both understood each other well.

The daughter, however, Mrs. Hartshorne hated and disliked in the strongest manner possible. She grew up uncared for, except as regarded frequent and summary corrections for childish misdemeanours; and if it had not been for the boy Tom she would have been altogether neglected. Little Susan was an eyesore to her mother in consequence of her being the only one provided for in Roger Hartshorne's will independently of the mother, to whom all the rest of the property, excepting of course the entail, was bequeathed without reservation. Mrs. Hartshorne considered her own child as a species of interloper or invader of her rights, and treated her accordingly with neglect and almost cruelty when the squire was no longer able to

look after and protect her. The very fondness of the old man for his little girl had been even an additional incentive for her illtreatment. When Susan had reached her fifteenth year—she was little more than a year older than Tom—the dislike of her mother culminated in an accident, which indeed might be characterised in worse terms, that somewhat checked the illtreatment and harshness she had previously suffered. She had done some trifling thing or other one day which had offended her mother to fury, and she consequently, after beating her most unmercifully, had locked her up all one night in a solitary part of the house by herself. The little thing was of a very nervous, tender organization; and the fright she suffered in the lonely darkness throughout the long hours of the night drove away her poor little wits. When the




child was let out the next day she was in a raging fever, and when she recovered from that, thanks to old Doctor Jolly (who was unremitting in his care, after frightening the mother by declaring her to be almost a murderess), she was never herself again. She remained quietly passive under any or every treatment of the mother "half silly," as the poor folks say, and half silly she was now still, although she was almost one-and-twenty. Her mental disorder was of a pathetic description—a sort of melancholia, and although her mother had procured governesses for her, and she knew, like a parrot, as much as most girls of her age in the matter of education, she never exhibited any likes or dislikes, or preferences, except for music, of which she was passionately fond: everything else that was taught her she learnt in a machine-like way.

Susan would spend hours each day, particularly in the evening, playing on an old chamber-organ, which occupied one of the disused rooms of the house, wild, wierd, melancholy melodies which appeared to soothe her, and give her the only sense of enjoyment she seemed to possess. Tom and Doctor Jolly were the only people she cared to see; her mother she disliked greatly, and had a sort of trembling fit whenever she came across her or passed her in the passages of the house; and the old female domestics she barely tolerated, although she liked old George, a simple, uneducated Sussex countryman (the county is great for its "chaw-bacons"), who now did all the odd jobs and outdoor work about the house since the establishment had been reduced.

Mrs. Hartshorne always had a governess or special person to look after Susan, and she was careful to put down all the expenses of the said individual to be charged against and deducted from the portion which her daughter was to inherit in accordance with the terms of the squire's will.

These governesses were always being changed, for few persons, even those who have taught themselves to submit, as governesses have to teach themselves, could long bear with the temper of the dowager. A new face was consequently ever coming and going within the narrow range of Susan Hartshorne's horizon.

Doctor Jolly used to say that perhaps some sudden shock of grief or joy might restore the poor girl to the full possession of her senses.



“But then,” he would remark, “I don’t know how that is going to happen, unless the old lady kicks the bucket.”

Thus was Mrs. Hartshorne placed, and it must be owned that a skeleton such as she had in her closet would not tend to sweeten her disposition. Hard and stern she was with all around her. She was her own farm agent, her own bailiff, her own man of business. If she had been entirely alone she would probably have had not a soul in the house with her, not even a domestic. She collected her own rents, and was never forgetful of a farthing owed to her. When the leases granted by the squire expired she would not let them be renewed, but kept her tenants under fear and trembling, with only a year’s certainty of possession of their homes ; and she waxed rich, did the dowager, and had by this time a

goodly pile of ready money at her bankers'. This was all for Tom, and, faith! the young sir would have a splendid inheritance when the dowager departed for the happy hunting grounds. The squire's property, before the advent of Mrs. Hartshorne, had been worth some ten thousand a year. It was now worth nearly half as much again, and the savings of the yearly income amounted to more than a hundred thousand pounds. "A very comfortable little sum of ready money, sir!" as the doctor would say.

The residence of the dowager was situated about a mile from the picturesque little village of Hartwood, which boasted not only of a special little station to itself on the S. C. Rail, but also of its own little church, quite independent of the sacred episcopal edifice general to the parish under whose jurisdiction it came.

The dowager owned the church as well as the village, and the right of presentation being in her gift, she had recently inducted the most extreme Ritualistic divine she could procure into the pulpit of Hartwood, just purely out of opposition to the rector of the district, whom she disliked, and who was supposed to be of strong evangelical principles.

The Poplars—there can be no mistake in saying it—was an extremely ugly house. Its architecture was neither Gothic nor Norman, Elizabethan or Tudor; it was an heterogeneous pile of stones and brickwork, scrambled together without any style or design. Inside it was comfortable enough, and roomy and rambling; without it seemed nothing but a collection of eaves and chimneys, and its sole redeeming point consisted in the lofty and spreading poplar trees which surrounded

it on all sides, as well as gave it its name, and concealed its native ugliness from strangers and passers-by.

There you have "The Poplars" and its mistress.

## CHAPTER III.

## THE FISH AND THE HOOK.

"HET—WOOD!" shouted the guard vehemently, as the train in which Tom Hartshorne and Markworth had left London drew up at a little wayside station, closely adjoining Hartwood village, the spire of whose church could be seen near at hand, amidst a group of lofty elm trees which surrounded it—and "Het—wood! Het—wood! Het—wood!" burst a



tribe of porters and railway men, after that official, chorusing in full cry to a musical accompaniment of door-slamming and steam-escapements.

"Here we are at last," ejaculated Tom, poking his head out of the window of one of the carriages as soon as they fairly stopped.

"Are we? Then the Lord be praised! Beastly long journey. More than two hours for only sixty or seventy miles!" responded his companion, stepping on to the platform, where they and their luggage were quickly deposited—the only arrivals for the little village—while the iron horse again grunted and puffed on its toilsome way with its string of cattle pens behind it.

"Good day, sir," said the station-master, touching his hat respectfully to Tom; "do you want a trap, sir?"

"No, thanks, we'll walk over; but will you send up our things for us, Murphy?"

"Certainly, sir; one of the men shall go at once with them. Here, Peter! shoulder them there bags, and follow Mister Hartshorne up t'ouse."

"It's much jollier to walk, Markworth," remarked Tom, as they left the station, and he led the way over a stile into a little by-path across a field; "it's a lovely afternoon, and we'll get there in half the time we should if we drove by the road."

"All right, my boy, I'm agreeable," answered Markworth.

So they sauntered on, walking in a narrow foot-wide track, through acres of gleaming green fields of oats and wheat, with their wavy motion, like the sea, and their rustling tops, one of the railway porters following

closely behind them, weighed down apparently by two heavy travelling-bags he carried, although, probably, he thought them but a trifle.

A pleasant walk it was on a fine summer day.

Presently Markworth could see a gaunt, grim stone wall in front of them, with a mass of tall, melancholy-looking, waving poplar trees behind it, all in a clump together.

"There's the place," said Tom! "we'll be there in no time. We can go through that side-door," pointing to a small gateway cut through the wall. "You must not mind, old chap, what my mother says, you know, at first. I told you she was a queer fellow, you know, and she will seem rough to you at first."

"I sha'n't mind, bless you, Tom—I oughtn't

to be afraid of any woman at my time of life, my hearty."

In another minute they had arrived at the small door they had been making for, and Tom rang the bell with a sonorous peal.

After waiting about a quarter of an hour, and ringing some three times, the gate was at length opened by George, the Dowager's "man of all work," an honest, tall, beaming-looking countryman, who stood at the entrance with a broad grin of pleasure on his rustic face.

"Whoy ! Lor sakes, measter Tummus ! It beant you, be it ? Well, to be sure !"

"Yes, it's me, sure enough, George. How are the rheumatics?"

"Och ! they be foine, sur?"

"Nice day, George, ain't it ? Good for the crops, eh?"

"Yees, surely! it's a foine day when the soon shoines! that it be, sur! Ho! ho! ho!" And George laughed a heavy, earthy sort of laugh, which partook of the nature of the clay in which he delved—it was so warm, and yet lumpish, and seemed to stick in his throat and be unable to come out, although his mouth was certainly opened wide enough to permit of its exit. It may be mentioned that this was one of George's time-honoured jokes about the sun and the weather, indeed the only one he ever knew of; and he would repeat it some twenty times a day, if anyone gave him the cue, each time being as much amused with it, and struck with its novelty and wit as if that were the first time he propounded it.

A sharp, querulous voice, which belonged to somebody evidently not far distant, here suddenly interposed—

“What are you standing jabbering and grinning there like a baboon for, man? Begone to your work man! Do you think I keep your idle carcass and pay your wages for you to be kicking your heels in the air all day and doing nothing? Begone to your work, man, and let my son in; if I ever catch you jabbbbering away like this again, out you go bag and baggage!”

Here it must be noted that the speaker did not pause a second in the delivery of this harangue—not a stop, such as have been put here for the sake of legibility, occurred between the words—the whole sentence rattled out as one word—a word fiery, hot, strong, and by no means sweet.

“Lor sakes! here’s the missus!” ejaculated George, in sudden terror; and clutching his spade, which he had put down to open the

gate, he disappeared amidst the shrubbery much sooner, and with a quicker movement than he had evidently acted the part of Janitor.

The Dowager it was, without a doubt—for her presence had quickly followed her words, and she now stood before the pair in all her imposing appearance with an irritated face, and her piercing eyes fixed on them enquiringly.

She was the first to break the short silence that ensued.

“Well, and so you have come at last, Thomas! There, shake hands! that will do. I wonder you have been able to tear yourself away from all your jackanape companions—a lot of reckless spendthrifts and conceited puppies, every one of them—to come and see your ugly, old mother at last. I am so old,

and, having no airs and graces to receive you like other people—all lies to be sure—that I wonder you do come at all! I suppose it is only because you want money—money, money, money, like the whole tribe of them—bloodsuckers all. But who's this fellow with you?" she said, abruptly, turning round on Markworth as if she were going to snap him up. "Who is he, and what does he want, shoving himself in?"

Tom hastened to introduce him, saying that he was an old friend, Mr. Allynne Markworth, who had been very kind to him, and whom he had ventured to invite down according to the express stipulation of his mother.

"Humph!" she muttered, "oh! that's it, is it; why did you not say so before instead of letting him stand staring there like an idiot? But you never had a head, Thomas, and never



will as long as you live! You are only fit to be a lazy soldier to flaunt about all day in a patchwork uniform and do nothing. The only sense you ever have shown was in selecting your profession! So this is Mr. Markworth, is it? Humph! I daresay he's like the rest of them—all calf's head and shrimp sauce! How do you do, Mr. Markworth?" She now spoke without the former asperity, and curtsied low in an old-fashioned manner. "Any friend of my son is welcome to my house, poor as it is! Please go on and lead the way, Thomas, with your friend; you will find a room ready prepared for him, and you know your own. We dine at the regular hour, five o'clock, and it only wants half-an-hour to that, so don't be late. I don't want any dressing or fal-lalling!" The old lady then turned into the shrubbery, evidently

after the recreant George, and she muttered to herself as she ambled along, "He's taller than Thomas, and a handsome puppy; but I don't like him—he's a rogue, or I'll eat my boots."

There was no need for such an unusual repast on the part of the Dowager; she might have been wider from the mark in her casual conjecture.

Punctually at five o'clock the tones of some huge clanging old bell clanked through the house, proclaiming the hour; and Tom tapping at Markworth's door, told him that dinner was ready. The latter at once appeared outside as elaborately dressed as if he were going to attend a Lord Mayor's banquet.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Tom, turning his companion round and gazing upon him with eyes of wonder; "why, what on earth led you

to get yourself up so fearfully?" as he led the way to the dining-parlour—a long, low, dismal room on the ground floor.

"I always mind little things," replied the other; "I never sacrifice appearances:" in truth he never did.

Tom, on the way down in the train, had explained all about his sister's infirmity—that she was "Not quite right here, you know," tapping his forehead significantly; so Markworth was not surprised to see a tall, pale, slim-looking girl seated at the table with her eyes bent down on her plate. She looked up in a sort of painful wonder when they entered, which changed into a pleased, unmeaning smile when she recognized Tom, and immediately again dropped her eyes.

She was dressed in a scarlet dress, made of some stuffy material. Her one weakness—if

weakness it were—was for bright colours ; she had often told Tom that they made her “feel warm and happy.” Poor child ! So she always wore scarlet or light-blue, or orange—the former hue was her favourite one, and she had evidently put on that dress to-day in honour of Tom, to show that she was glad and happy to see him.

Susan Hartshorne looked older perhaps than she really was ; she had beautiful features, but her face was without expression, save that Markworth could perceive—for he had been intently watching her—an occasional careworn or agonised look pass across it whenever her mother spoke, which she did every now and then in sharp accents to the old woman servant who waited on them at table. The Dowager had taken no notice of Markworth in a conversational sense, although

she eyed him frequently, except to mutter "coxcomb!" in an underbreath (which he however distinctly heard), when he first entered the room, and once to ask him to be helped to some dish before her.

The meal was a good one. The old lady received a portion of her rents "in kind," and was never at a loss for fresh poultry, fish, or vegetable, not to speak of game; but it was soon over, for the presiding genius evidently looked upon it in the light of a serious business which was not to be trifled with. When the last dish had been brought in and removed, the dowager got up from her seat and stalked majestically out of the room, followed silently by her daughter, who seemed to glide rather than move.

"Rum old party, ain't she? But she's good, though, and I like her in my way, you

know, the same as she does me," observed Tom.

"Yes," said Markworth, neither affirmatively nor in a questioning tone of voice, but with a mixture of both inflections. "Where, however, is that governess you were talking about to me?"

"Oh! Miss Kingscott! 'Pon my soul I don't know. Let's go and hunt her up; I have not seen her yet."

Just then they heard the melancholy notes of an organ in the distance, as they turned into the passage.

"That's Susan," observed her brother. "I daresay Miss Kingscott is with her."

They followed the strains, which grew louder as they penetrated into the back and apparently deserted quarters of the house.

"Here we are," said Tom, as he opened

the door of the room from whence the music proceeded.

A dark, haughty, ladylike girl, clad in rustling black silk, stood up and faced the door as they entered.

"Miss Kingscott, I presume?" Tom asked, bowing politely with his usual frankness.

"Whew! By jingo!" ejaculated Markworth, between his teeth. "I'm blessed if it isn't Clara!"

CHAPTER IV.

MISS KINGSCOTT.

“WHO was Miss Kingscott?”

“Aye, that would be telling, sure,” as a native of the Emerald Isle says when you question him about anything he does not care to disclose. But few persons could give you any satisfactory answer to your enquiry, not even the sharp, shrewd old dowager in whose employ she now was. She might tell you



that Miss Kingscott was a governess, a lady's companion—regarding her in the light of a saleable article of furniture—and that she came to her well recommended, and that she supposed she knew what she professed to teach, and was worth her wages, or she would not be hired; but she personally thought her “a bold hussie,” and that was all. Knowledge has its limits, and there Mrs. Hartshorne ceased.

Who was Miss Kingscott? An easy question on the face of it, but one requiring a very complicated answer. Who was she? Why, *une fille errante*, a nobody's child, a sort of female Bedouin, whose hand was against every man's—and woman's also—as she thought theirs to be against her. A woman young, beautiful, and, beyond all, clever, and not only very clever but heartless, and as devoted to self as

she was *sans cœur*. One who could take her part—aye, and play her part—before the world; a fair face with a devil's heart—that is if a devil does have a heart—and great keen basilisk eyes. One who might be anything and everything, for you could hardly judge her as to what *rôle* would suit her best, or rather suit her purpose best. A child yesterday, a woman to-day—nay, she could never have been a child. Only a governess now mayhap, but she might be *miladi* to-morrow if she plays her cards well. Pshaw! she always played her cards well, for there's a rare little plotting head on her well-formed shoulders. Miss Kingscott, *entendez vous*, is a clever woman; one day she may be any character she please, and God knows what the next.

Now to sketch her personal attributes. In

the ante-passport abolition days an employé in the *Bureau des Passeportes* might have put her down as follows: *Des yeux—gris; nez—aquilin; teint—pâle; cheveux—noirs; et taille moyenne.* In plain English she was a girl—woman that is—of some five feet two in height, of pale—strange the French have no distinction between pale and sallow—complexion, and with black hair and grey eyes. Grey eyes the Gallic officer would call them, but that would not describe them; they were basilisk eyes, eyes that had a depth of cunning, and treachery, and entrancement in them, which no colour term would express.

Ten years ago Clara Joyce—she had lately adopted the name of Kingscott, bequeathed her by a maiden aunt, who left her nothing else but her patronymic, which she could wear or not as she pleased, for there was no

one living to question her right to the same—filled the position of English governess at a *Pensionat des Filles* in the *Rue des Courcelles* in Paris. The school was a famous one, and is a famous one still, so we must not be too particular about names or dates exactly.

Her previous life had been one of hardship, slavery, and neglect. Her parents had died when she was quite young, and she was placed at school, not to learn merely her education like her mates, but to learn her profession. She was to be a governess, and her earlier years were but a training for what she had afterwards to go through. First, she was a scholar *pur et simple*; next, she became a sort of general drudge, or female usher, as she grew older; and then her aunt—when the harpy who watched over her budding intellects grew tired of her temper, and declared her

to be sufficiently taught to be able to teach others, —told her she could do nothing more for her, having recommended her to a situation, where she was engaged to teach every possible and impossible grace and accomplishment at starvation rate, and *ma tante* washed her hands metaphorically of her. This aunt of hers, who was the only relative that Clara Joyce ever remembered coming across, was by no means the sort of person to impress anyone with the idea of domestic affection, so houseless, homeless, and friendless, the girl had been all her school life, and houseless, homeless, and friendless she was when turned out into the world.

The very marrow of her nature had been frozen by her surroundings, and the life of a governess was not one to imbue her with any better feelings, although it increased her

knowledge of human nature. One situation after another she filled in England until she was fairly sick of her country, and she eagerly accepted the position offered her in the *pensionat* in Paris, thinking that it might throw her into a fresh field and improve her chances of rising in the social scale. She had been an *intriguante* early, her experiences of life already had deepened her convictions that in order to succeed she must skilfully manœuvre the wires, looking upon her fellows as puppets; but even then if she had had a fair chance—good heavens! how many of us are there not crying out for a fair chance—Clara Joyce would have turned out a very different person from the Clara Kingscot, of our story; but it was not to be.

At the time she entered the *pensionat* she was barely twenty years of age—she was now

consequently just thirty—a handsome girl, although somewhat thin and pale, from the hard life and harder living she had gone through ; and she now determined more than ever to take advantage of her looks and chances, literally to husband her resources. To endeavour in fact by a wealthy marriage—she had read and was told that eligible *parties* were much sooner picked up on the continent than in the more calculating Britain—to rid herself for ever of her working life, and be above the danger of want, which, poor *intriguante*, she had already gone through, and the necessity for drudgery.

She had no romance in her nature, no absurd ideas on the subject of love and happiness which the more benighted of us sometimes imagine to be indissolubly connected with the married state ; but, taking her as

she was, and putting such thoughts out of consideration, Clara Joyce, if she had had the chance, as has been before suggested, might have made a most exemplary wife for some one, and turned out, perhaps, a highly correct and eminently respectable mother of a family. Consider, now, she was brought up to slave for others, to subdue her own private feelings and wishes, to conceal her own thoughts and opinions, to enact a series of petty deceptions and tell white lies every day. How many are there not of our noble army of British matrons who go through the same parts every day? Fancy how Joan has to wheedle old Darby, and laugh at his stale jokes and "keep up appearances," and slave for the children, so that her life is one long drudgery, the same as Clara's. *Ma foi!* there are slaves and slaves, many whose black skins



are hidden by a white mask, and whose chains clank beneath their silk or merino gowns.

French life with its manners and customs pleased our young *debutantes*. Although as a matter of course, *mademoiselles les étudiantes* were carefully looked after, yet she had plenty of liberty allowed her, for she so "got round" the *directrice* of the school that she was nearly her own mistress; and she was not slow to employ her spare time in seeing as much as she could of the gay city, its habits, and its visitors. *Madame la Directrice* would have been shocked if she had known that her timid little modest English teacher, "such a quiet little thing, *pauvre enfant!*" often went to fêtes by herself, *sans chaperone*, and had been even seen in one of those monstrous places—a theatre! The *gouvernante* was a shrewd, cautious little actress, and *Madame*

*la Directrice* was as blind, bah! as a mole. It was easy enough to make up a little story of relations to be seen, and to show letters of invitation imploring a certain demure English teacher to visit her poor aunt, who was all alone in Paris. And then the *pauvre enfante* was so regular in coming back. She was always in at the fixed hour every evening she went out—so quiet, so punctual. Madame never dreamt of such things as bribing a *concierge*!

While Clara Joyce was thus busying herself in investigating human nature, a certain young Englishman came to Paris, and in one of her excursions he made her acquaintance. *Monsieur l'Anglais* was tall and handsome and rich. He had plenty of money, and was liberal, and was looked upon as a *milord* at least by those with whom he associated. The

young Englishman, however, was as shrewd and clever as the *gouvernante*. Need it be said that his name was one with which we are already acquainted? It was Allynne Markworth.

Clara Joyce was an elegant, pretty girl, and the way he made her acquaintance was in itself an additional charm. Markworth was attracted by her, and courted her society. He had then a little romance in him, and was to a certain extent in love with her; but the girl was as cautious as he was enamoured. She thought that at last she had succeeded in picking up her eligible *parti*, not only a wealthy one, but a young and handsome one also, a regular pearl of price. But, like all young players, she underrated her adversary, and let him see her hand too soon. Markworth was not one to be caught so easily. He was one,

also, who was marketing on his good looks, and contemplated matrimony only through the diamond light of a fortune. He was not going to sacrifice himself for a pretty English governess, who had only her graces to recommend her, and not a sou of *dot*! He laughed at her when she spoke of the hymeneal altar; and so poor Clara Joyce—one cannot help pitying a clever woman who lays herself out to win and loses in the end—had made her *coup* and missed it just by a fluke!

She had staked her all, her *petit rouleau* of a heart on “black,” and here *noir perd et passe le coup*, as the gentleman, who presides over a queer looking long table divided into red and black squares as to its surface, at Homburg, says mechanically as he rakes in the little piles of glittering coin and quires of *billets de*

*banque*, while the unlucky gamesters gaze on him ruefully, and bite their nails in disgust.

The girl was furious against him. She railed at him, she threatened him, she vowed vengeance, but he did not care a jot. He had not committed himself. He was too wary for that, and what did he care? She bored him, he said, and so he took himself off, and left her to her own machinations. But Clara was not one to be insulted or injured with impunity. She had vowed vengeance, and she intended to have it. She interested herself about Markworth. She wrote to England about him. She found out many little things about him, which he never thought any one would recollect, or know here in Paris, at all events. By her indefatigable exertions, she discovered after a year's spying, and seeking,

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and enquiry, that Markworth was on the eve of marriage with a millionairess—a besotted old widow of a Lyons manufacturer, who adored Englishmen, especially if they were *milords*, and the young lady communicated with the friends of the *devotée*. Through information she gave, the match was broken off, and Markworth learnt who had spoiled his little game. He could not do much, however; he could only expose her at the Pension, and then there was a fine blow up with Madame Bonehose, the *Directrice*. Of course Clara had to leave—such a “little snake in the grass,” as Madame called her. But she had had her revenge. Not that she was satisfied yet. That was only the first of a series of attacks she planned. She intended to be Mrs. Allynne Markworth’s evil star through life. It was an unlucky day for him, according to the

Fates, when he came across her orbit and discovered Clara Joyce.

After leaving the *Pensionat des Filles* in disgrace, she next became a *Femme de Chambre* to a Marquise of questionable reputation, with whom she remained some two years, travelling about and increasing her knowledge of the world. But she had not forgotten Markworth, not she, and was ready to lay her hand on him again whenever she had the opportunity.

Time passed, and she came back once more to England. Her aunt died, so she assumed her name; and, as Miss Kingscott now, she took a situation once more in an English family at a cathedral town in the south. She knew *he* was in London now, and she wanted to be near him. She was so fond of him, you see!

But she had another little game, too, to watch over. One day Doctor Jolly had come to visit at the house where she was employed as a governess, and where she was about leaving, on account of the breaking up of the household. Doctor Jolly was impressed with her, and our heroine, having made enquiries, thought there might be worse lots in life than being a rich doctress: so she made eyes at him, and set her cap coquettishly.

The doctor mentioned that Mrs. Harts-horne was in want of a lady companion for her daughter, and said he would recommend her.

Miss Kingscott was agreeable. She had heard there was an only son—Poor Tom!—and who knew what might turn up? Besides, she would be near the doctor, and consequently have him to fall back upon.



And so she came to be domesticated at The Poplars. The old lady squabbled with her, but she gave her as much as she got; and the dowager, pleased with having some one worth quarrelling with, retained her.

Susan, of course, was passive in her hands, and the son of the house she had not yet seen, so she bided her time, and diligently cultivated old Jolly, whose cheery "How-de-do!" to her would be heard afar, echoing through the poplar trees when he came to visit at the house, which he now did much oftener than before.

She was surprised, naturally, to see Markworth at the present juncture, but not so much as he was. He of course had not recognised her new name, which, indeed, he had never heard of before; and would have been as pleased—aye! more so—to have met his

Satanic Majesty now than his quondam Parisian love—the little English governess.

“D—— her!” he growled, *sotto voce* to himself; “what the devil brings her here to spoil my game?”

## CHAPTER V.

## COUNTING THE COST.

"MISS KINGSCOTT, I presume?" said Tom, bowing politely, as the lady gave a Parthian glance, sharp, quick, and incisive, of mingled recognition and command-to-keep-his-own-counsel-until-further-orders at her *soi-disant* lover Markworth, who stood in the rear of his companion, and who, although he was startled at her appearance, was too much the cool man

of the world to give expression aloud to his astonishment. "Humph !" he thought unto himself, as he pulled his wits together. "I'm to keep dark, I suppose," and he adopted an air of well-bred indifference.

Miss Kingscott smiled betwittingly on the young squire.

"I am Tom Hartshorne," continued that gentleman, in a warm, friendly manner. "You have been very kind to my sister, and I hope we shall be friends."

This was a pleasant little fiction, by the way, on Tom's part, as he had no previous knowledge whatever of Miss Kingscott's kindness, or the reverse, but the young officer was of a gallant disposition.

"Oh, indeed !" said the lady, with an air of agreeable surprise. "And so you are Mr. Tom. I am sure dear Susan has spoken often

enough to me about you. I am only Miss Hertshorne's governess, you know, but I've no doubt we will be good friends as far as our respective positions will allow."

Humility was one of her cards, you see, but it was thrown away on Tom: he was more shocked than pleased, as others more ~~purse-~~proud might have been, at the contrast drawn.

"This is my friend Allynne Markworth," he went on, hurriedly; "we ran down together for a week to dissipate the London dust. He and I are great friends, so I hope that we'll all be jolly together."

Both inclined as if they had never seen each other before. Mr. Markworth was remarkably deferential, with a concealed sneer on his lips, and the governess sweeping in her condescension.

Some little commonplace expressions and conversation then passed between the party, and you would have thought it the most delightful trio in the world.

All the while Susan Hartshorne was aloof from the party, seated in a corner of the half-furnished and half-lighted room, for the outside shutters were partially closed, and it looked as if it had not been inhabited for years—most probably a fire had not been lighted in its old grate since the squire's death. She was playing on an antique-looking organ, with its zigzag rows of metal pipes which nearly filled up one end of the apartment, a fitful sort of air which rose and fell every now and then with a shriek like the last despairing moan of one of the lost spirits in Dante's *Inferno*. Presently she ceased

playing, and coming up to the others touched Tom on the arm.

“Come, brother,” she said, in a low, soft voice, without any inflexion in it; and, taking no notice of either the governess or Markworth, she led him gently towards the door. “You must see my garden,” she continued, speaking to him as if they were alone, just in the same quiet tones.

“I’ll be back presently ; pray excuse me,” said Tom, as he went out ; and Markworth and Miss Kingscott were left alone.

The former was the first to speak.

“So we’ve changed names, have we? Clara Joyce is dead, and Miss Kingscott reigns in her stead ?”

“Mr. Allynne Markworth, however, is still flourishing, I see,” she replied, in accents

whose sarcasm was bitter enough and apparent enough, without glancing at her scornful flashing eyes.

“Yes, small blame to you; but I don’t think you’ll play any more tricks with me again. Well, that’s long ago, and I can ‘forgive and forget ;’ I shan’t rake up the past if you won’t. You are here under an assumed name, and—but, what’s it to be, Clara, peace or war between us?”

“Or you’ll unmask me, eh? You will tell all about the silly English teacher-girl who was *éprise* of a swindling vagabond, and the mistress of whose school was so very correct as to discharge her without a character, will you? You’d like to get me turned out from here, the house of your rich country friends, would you?” she spoke rapidly and with intense bitterness. “Bah! I do not fear you,



Allynne Markworth, any more than I do that baby-faced, idiot girl who has just left the room !”

“What’s the use of going on like that, Clara ? Who said that I was going to injure you, or that you were afraid of me ? By Jove ! I know to my cost you’re not. Why can’t you be calm and look at things reasonably ? You and I may be able to assist each other, and it’s better for us to be friends than enemies.”

“I care as little for your enmity as I do for the valuable friendship you gave me formerly. There can be little in common between us. Besides, even if I had the inclination, I don’t see how either you can help me, or I you.”

“But you can help me very much.”

“Ha ! I thought you wanted something !

No, there can be no accord between us. You are a man of the world, and I am, myself!" (here she laughed bitterly) "so let us each go our own way in peace or in war, just as you please—it's indifferent to me."

"What nonsense!" said Markworth. "It is not indifferent to you. You can assist me here in this very house, and, if you do, it will be to your advantage."

"Of course, you don't gain anything by it?"

"If my scheme succeeds, you shall share the profits."

"You will take the lion's share, I have no doubt! and if you fail?"

"I alone will bear the loss."

"How generous you are!"

"Well, do you consent to join forces? is it settled? Am I to tell Mrs. Hartshorne—how

pleased she'll be to hear it!—the character of the governess she has got for her daughter, or are we to form an operative alliance !”

“Markworth, you are a villain !”

“Granted,” he said, calmly. “Do you agree ?”

“I suppose I must,” she replied. “You are not to interfere with me ? and I—”

“Will assist me to the best of your ability. That's a bargain ; I thought you would be reasonable, Clara.”

“But what do you want me to do ?” she asked, after a slight pause, fixing her eyes searchingly on his face.

“It is nothing criminal. You will not have to commit yourself in any way. I don't want you to do anything, in fact ; I only want you to keep in the background, and not spoil sport. Will you do it ?”

"Agreed," she answered. "And your grand scheme is—"

"Marriage," he said, curtly.

"Well, it won't be your first attempt in that way at all events! Of course, there's a fortune in view, or you would not try that speculation. But who's the lady—not me, I presume?" she enquired, with another of those short bitter laughs which sounded so strangely from her lips.

"Not exactly!" he sneered; "I don't think you and I would just suit one another. Listen," he resumed, quietly, looking towards the door, and drawing closer to her, and sinking his voice as he spoke, "The girl is here—you understand?"

"I confess I do not see your drift," she said, wishing to draw him on to a full disclosure.

"Pshaw! Clara, you are not a fool ; you understand me well enough."

"Perhaps I do, and perhaps I don't."

"Your eyes are not so blind that you cannot see when it is to your own interests. But there's no use in beating about the bush or mincing matters ; you know this girl here."

"What! Susan Hartshorne—that poor idiot?" she exclaimed with well-acted amazement and horror.

"That same and no other," replied Markworth, positively blushing at being obliged actually to confess his own villainy. "But she's not an idiot, she's only foolish—half-silly ; and there's no harm in it," he continued, half apologetically.

"And you want to marry her?" said the other.

"I do not *want* to marry her ; I *mean* to

marry her!" answered Markworth, quite himself again, and with his usual coolness and *sang froid*, "and you must help me. Listen! That girl has a fortune of twenty thousand pounds. I am so hard run for money that unless I get some before the present month is up, I shall be ruined—that girl has money which she does not want, and can never feel the need of—do you follow me?—consequently I mean to marry that girl. Nobody cares for her here; her mother, I daresay, will be glad to get rid of her, and the girl will suffer no loss."

"You will take care of her, I suppose!" said the governess, in her pleasant biting way.

"Yes, I will take care of her—as good care, I daresay, as she gets now."

"Well, and supposing I lent myself to your

purposes, what am I to get—what is to be my share in the transaction? You don't suppose I am going to assist you and risk my situation for nothing?"

"I tell you what, Clara, if you help me in the affair I'll give you two hundred pounds; I can't give you more now, and I'll have hard work to get that, for I daresay I will have to go through a long law suit before I can get her fortune, and spend most of it, perhaps, in doing so, even if I do succeed in marrying the girl and getting her off."

"It's little enough! but how shall I know that you will pay me?—you have cheated me before, Markworth, and I would not trust your word for sixpence."

"You need not if you don't like, but I'll act fairly in the matter. I will give you a hundred before I get the girl away, and another

hundred after I am married to her. There, will that do? If I don't pay you, you can expose the whole affair; and if you go back on me you will implicate yourself afterwards; so it serves both our purposes to act squarely. Do you know what the girl's age is?"

"Yes, twenty-one; I saw her age in the old family Bible, which Mrs. Hartshorne keeps up-stairs in her own room."

"Well I wish you would get me a look at it, or find out the exact date of her birthday for me—it's important."

"I will let you know either this evening or to-morrow, better say to-morrow."

"That will do. Then the bargain is concluded between us. All I want you to do now is to help me gain the girl over, she looks tractable enough—and help me to get her away quietly. I'll give you the hundred



before I get her off; then as soon as I marry her you shall get the other century. I can't help keeping my word to you, for you see it suits my own interest. It's little enough I want you to do. If all goes well it will run hard if I don't succeed and get the fortune, and I'll remember you afterwards. Do you agree—is it a settled thing between us?"

"Yes," said she, apparently reflecting a moment. "I suppose that will do, for if you don't pay me I shall then be able to disclose the whole transaction."

"Precisely," he answered, complacently. "You can have me indicted for conspiracy and what not! but there'll be no fear of that. We will not quarrel, Clara; what suits my book will suit yours."

Besides consulting Roger Hartshorne's will he had obtained legal advice on his contem-

plated marriage before coming down to The Poplars.

"Very well, if you are sensible you will play fair in the undertaking, and I shall be satisfied. If you keep your word I shall assist you; at all events *I* am not going to marry the girl, so I shan't have anything to complain of if I get my money."

"I will pay you, never fear! and you must keep to your bargain, and allow me to work my own way with the girl, and assist me in the end to get her off. Don't forget to let me know to-morrow her right age, and write down the date of her birth—it might be useful to me. But about the girl herself, she is not really mad, is she?"

"I thought you yourself told me just now she was not."


"Bother! don't be so aggravating, Clara ;

you ought to know the girl, and be able to tell me about her."

"You need not alarm yourself, Mr. Allynne Markworth," replied Miss Kingscott, with a sneer; "on the contrary, allow me to congratulate you. You have tumbled into luck's way, and appear to have fallen upon your legs as usual. The girl is only, as you said, half-silly, and without being exactly an idiot can be made to do anything you and I please—that is, by judicious management."

She was going to say something further, but at this moment Tom re-entered the room, and, of course, the conversation was dropped.

"I was just asking Miss Kingscott if she liked croquet, and, Tom, do you know—can you believe it, she has never heard of that flirtative and fascinating game?" said Markworth, in his usual free and elegant manner.



"Really!" said Tom. "Then we must enlighten her. Markworth is the prince of croquetters, you know, Miss Kingscott" — turning to her, and that lady seemed pleased for the information, and transfixed poor Tom with her beautifully expressive eyes.

"Fine girl," he said presently to Markworth, as they went out of the room to smoke their cigars in the garden.

"Ya-a-s," he replied, spinning out his answer as if he had not quite made up his mind on the subject; "but she's no chicken."

He was right, and he ought to know, at all events. Miss Kingscott was "no chicken," either in years or in strength of mind.

The evening passed quietly with Tom and his visitor, neither the governess nor Susan being seen again, and the old dowager was

especially gracious as bed-time drew nigh. This was fixed at an early hour—ten o'clock.

Markworth was presently in his room, and as he undressed he moralised on the events of the day, and the progress of his plot.

“Rum, wasn’t it?” he soliloquised, “meeting Clara here; but it is a decided pull in my favour. The thing is regularly *en train* now, and must come off soon. The girl is passable enough, and at all events I don’t care. I must risk Tom’s anger; but I don’t suppose he will mind it much—he’s soft, and I can manage him as I like. There’s only the old lady, and I hardly know how to wheedle her yet, she’s so downright and plain spoken. By Jove! of all the characters I ever met she’s one!”

In the midst of his meditations a loud authoritative rap came to the door.

“Your light!” said a thin, sharp voice, which he instantly recognised as Mrs. Harts-horne’s.

He opened the door, and nearly burst out laughing at the odd figure which presented itself. It was the dowager, clothed in a long white garment, and with an immense frilled night-cap on her head, and two or three candlesticks in one hand, and a huge bunch of keys in the other.

“What are you staring like a stuck pig at? Give me your candlestick! All the lights in my house go out at half-past ten o’clock every night. That’s my rule, and I won’t break it for anyone, I don’t care who! Give me your light.”

Markworth handed the candlestick to the old lady, who presently retreated down the

passage with her arms outstretched, looking like the Witch of Endor.

“No chance of a cigar here,” he said to himself, as he closed the door once more, and jumped into bed. “She would smell it at once; I’d back her nose against a pointer’s any day. She’s a rum un; of all the characters, by Jove! I ever met, she is one!”

And he turned in his bed and slept the sleep of the just, in which the wicked equally share.

## CHAPTER VI.

## CONCERNING CERTAIN YOUNG PERSONS.

It came to pass on the following Sunday, two days after their arrival, that Tom and his friend went to church along with the dowager, as befitted respectable people, and a family of state in the county. Not to the parish church, where the Rev. Jabez Heavieman preached his ponderous sermons, and warned his congregation of their approaching perdition, and



the damnation of their souls, in his customary evangelical style. Oh, no! but to the altogether-of-a-different-sort-of-a-doctrine little edifice in Hartwood village, which specially belonged to the Sussex Dowager. Indeed she regarded not only the church as her own peculiar property, but also its officiating clergyman, clerk, school children, nay, even the very future hopes of salvation of the worshippers who frequented it.

Hartwood Church was as unpretending a building as to its style as The Poplars.

It was a small ungainly-looking, low-roofed structure, oblong with a stone cross at one end, and a short square tower at the other. It was built of rough stone, and had apparently been constructed with a deficient supply of mortar; and a small abutment, which it had on one side for the requirements of the porch and vestry-

room, had more the semblance of a shed attached to a farmhouse than anything else. It was an old church, too, probably much older than the one belonging to the parish ; and its little churchyard, encircled by rude wooden palings, contained some monuments and tombstones, which were grey with age and as rough as when they were first hewn from the quarry, telling how "John Giles, ætat 95," and "Richard Chawbacon, ætat 104," both of whom departed this life Anno Domini 16 hundred and something, were there entombed. All the Hartshorne family, too, from Geoffrey Hartshorne, who founded the race and belonged to the Roundhead party in the days of Cromwell, down to the last old squire, there rested their bones in peace. One peculiarity of the churchyard, however, consisted in the great age to which its inhabitants had attained

before shaking off this mortal coil. Ninety years was a comparatively early time for any of the former citizens of Hartwood to dream of sleeping with his fathers; and although you occasionally came across an inscription sacred to the memory of a young man of seventy or thereabouts, the majority of the departed were mostly centenarians.

The interior of the church was very different to what you might have expected from the outside view. The dowager, to do her justice, was not mean in all things; and, although she would screw her tenants down and pinch her household, she could occasionally—very occasionally it must be confessed—be not only liberal but grand in her views, that is when it suited her book. She had had the church newly fitted up some short time before, when her High Church fever and devotion to

Ritualism had first begun ; and all its columns and cross beams and rough rafters, which could be seen within, were newly varnished and resplendent in their graining. The chancel, too, was a wonder of blue and gold, and she had also presented a novel reading-desk or *lectern*, consisting of a brass eagle with outstretched wings, which stood in the centre of the aisle, and presented quite a grand appearance.

The pews were not what one generally calls pews at all: they were a series of high-backed benches, armed at each end, and placed in rows down the middle of the aisle facing the pulpit and chancel, those at the side being arranged at right angles, so that the lateral pews faced each other; this position must be borne in mind, as it accounts for a

trifling circumstance which led to the origin of the present chapter.

Slowly and majestically Mrs. Hartshorne marched into the church, and slowly and majestically Tom marched after her, carrying her large prayer-book and Bible of the size originally distributed by the Religious Tract Society—a service generally performed by the henchman “Jarge,” as he pronounced his own name—while Markworth brought up the rear of the procession.

The dowager’s pew was immediately opposite the pulpit, and, of course, facing the side pews on the other side behind the reading-desk, the front one of which was devoted to the use of the incumbent for the time being and his family, in case he had any.

Up the aisle in its onward and solemn pro-

gress the procession passed, and the dowager was soon ensconced in the extreme upper corner of the pew, with her devotional exercises arranged before her on the *prie-Dieu*, and her hands folded on her lap, now deprived of their customary woolen envelopes, as prim as you please. "Primness was no name for it, sir," as Markworth said afterwards to Tom; "her position was—yes, sir, statuesque, by Jove!" The guest sat bodkin between the two, while Tom occupied the corner—by the place where the door should have been if there had been one—from which point he could command a portion of the clerical pew, otherwise obscured from general observation, at least on this side of the house, by the reading desk.

Tom, I am sorry to say, was not particularly devout in church. He would keep his

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eyes straying from his book, and yet his attention did not wander over the whole edifice, for he looked straight in front of him, and none but a very curious observer could have detected his lack of devotional zeal. His mother did not notice it, for she was apparently plunged heart and soul into the liturgy, although really making up her mind as to the possibility of raising Farmer Grigg's rent upon having seen the daughters of that unfortunate worthy, who were esteemed the belles of the village, come into church with new bonnets and actually silk dresses! "when I can not afford them, the brazen hussies." As for Markworth he was wondering what a ~~can~~ lot the Chawbacons were, and how funny they all looked clean washed and scraped, and with their elaborately-braided white smock-~~trunks~~ on over their black trowsers, looking

as if they had donned suplices, or, as he hit upon a better illustration, as if they had put on their night-shirts—I beg pardon, *robes de chambre*—and come out by mistake instead of going to bed. So Tom had it all his own way.

Tom was observant, but it was nothing so very noticeable that attracted his attention. It was only a bonnet! only a little coquettish arrangement of ribbons and lace, and very little crown to it, if any,—only one of those tiny specimens of Madame Charles or Leroux, handiwork which you can see any day in Leicester Square, and which though apparently so trifling are worth far more than their weight in gold—as poor Paterfamilias knew to his cost. It is a dainty, demure little article enough, but nothing in it is there to warrant this wrapt attention on Tom's part.



Can he be considering how two ribbons can be held together in that artful mode by a mere straw? is he a disciple of the millinery art? No, that would not make the gallant young officer gaze so entrancingly, and cause the ruddy flush of excitement to colour his budding cheek! Master Tom is not so simple as that, although he may be a most ingenuous youth. The bonnet has a wearer who will keep her eyes bent down as earnestly as Tom persists in raising his from his book, and fixing them over the way, except now and then an occasional blushing little look across, and then once more down deep into the service again. It is a pretty little bonnet and has a pretty little owner, as Tom thinks. He "considers it a shame," but he cannot help letting his enquiring optics travel over the way. Young rogue! how he enjoys seeing the

colour which his too-earnest gaze calls up—the pink signal of maidenly reserve, pleasure, coyness, consciousness.

There is no blame attached to Tom, those heavenly violet eyes have done it all. He could not help it even if he would. Tom is hopelessly in love—love at first sight—with pretty Lizzie Pringle, Mrs. Hartshorne's young incumbent's sister. He is thoroughly in for it, as much as if he had known her for months or years.

It is all very well for you, Monsieur Cynic, or you, Madame Artless, to say that there is no such thing as "love at first sight." Of course it is foolish, but it is not impossible ; Cupid, my dear sir or madam, is a most erratic as well as *erotic* young gentleman, and plays some strange pranks sometimes. A glance from a pair of bright eyes will some-


times, one glance, effect a wonderful metamorphosis in even the sternest misogynists, create a revolution, ruin an empire. Look at history, Monsieur Cynic, and answer me if you dare. Nay, my dear sir, it is not impossible, not even improbable. A single word, one look between sympathetic souls, often establishes that cordial affinity which years of intercourse, and dictionaries of words, and oceans of sighs will not create between others who have not met their mental kindred. Philosophy cannot argue against Cupidon ; he laughs Plato and his platitudes to scorn. *Dixi!* I have spoken. Tom has fallen in love, and it was a clear case of love at first sight, with Lizzie Pringle just the girl he was ordained—in a non-clerical sense—to fall in love with.

She was as nice a little thing as you could

conceive—slim, *petite*, with dark brown hair nearly black, such heavenly violet eyes with liquid depths, and the most ravishing little rosebud of a mouth and piquante little nose possible for any one but a fairy to possess; she was so winning, innocent, pretty a specimen of God's gift to man, that the fact is Master Tom would have deserved being called an *eingebornen knarren*, adopting the German text for fool, if he had *not* fallen a victim immediately to her violet eyes. And then she was dressed so bewitchingly—not in gaudy contrasts, or in the extreme of the *mode*, but so neatly and in such a lady-like manner that she must have attracted even wiser heads than his.

Of course she saw him looking at her—of course she did! “What a rude staring fellow he is to be sure!” she said to herself mentally,

and resolved not to look that way again but to fix her attention sternly on the Thirty-nine Articles ; still she would have just one peep more.—“ There he is again, the great rude creature ! What nice blue eyes he has, and such a little love of a moustache ! and what on earth can he find to look at so persistently over here ? ” And down would go the long dark lashes again, and a little conscious blush would rise, and even the tender little ears and supple white neck would be encrimsoned. “ It must be Mister Tom,” she determined, “ that dark ugly man that went in with Mistress Hartshorne could not be him ; but he is a very naughty fellow to be staring at a young lady like that.” Yet she would go on to excuse him to herself. “ Perhaps he does not know any better, poor fellow ; he’s very young ” (she was just seventeen



mind you), "and when I know him I will tell him what I think of his rudeness." And then she would wonder to herself whether she ever would know him, and it sent a pang to her little heart when she thought she might not, and then Master Tom would catch her eye, and the tell-tale blush would hang out its pink flag again, and there would be a little flush of happiness, and so *da capo*. Just picture to yourself, Corydon, your little flirtation or *grande passion* with Phyllis, and you can easily fill up all the blanks and imagine the rest.

The Reverend Herbert Pringle, B.A., Oxon, who now filled the living at Hartwood, was a very young man ; but a very great man in his own estimation, and in that of some others also, as to family, talents, and ritualistic attainments in the church. He was

the cousin, twice removed, of Sir Boanerges Todhunter the great anti-taxpayer and member of the Opposition, belonged to the extensive High Church party at Oxford, had gained some celebrity at the Union Debating Club; and here he was now the regular incumbent (for a term of only five years be it known, for the Sussex Dowager liked always to have a hold on her tenants in the matter of leases, and stretched her authority to the livings she had in her gift) of a respectable church in a good county, where he could do as he pleased—at an age when the majority of his compeers would be struggling along perhaps in their first curacies.

He had reason to be proud of himself; and really, putting aside a certain priggishness of manner and affectation of style, he was not such a very bad fellow. Take him out of the

church, and he would have been a regular jolly fellow, who would have got along capitally in a mess room or in a hunting county, for he was dearly inclined to horse-flesh, and had kept his two hunters at Swain's before he had "gone in" for the High Church party of "young Oxford." He was a short, well-built, straw-whiskered man of some eight and twenty, although almost boyish in manner and in face. He had pleased the dowager by the way in which he had officiated as curate during the long illness of the late incumbent, and she had determined to put him in the vacant pulpit, if only out of opposition, as has been observed before, to the Reverend Jabez Heavieman, whom she cordially detested.

Herbert Pringle had therefore tumbled upon a snug thing. "His lines had fallen in



pleasant places," so here he was inducted into the living of Hartwood. His first step was to set up housekeeping, in order to do which he had to bring his favourite little sister Lizzie from school to "keep house" for him, and then he set about making further improvements in his district, for which he had *carte blanche* from the dowager, who, whenever she heard of some fresh innovation, thought to herself, "I wonder what that old hypocrite"—alluding to the Reverend Jabez—"thinks of that now!"

The restoration of the church was effected at the new incumbent's especial request; and the brass lectern was given by the old lady because the young divine had munificently presented a huge painted window, the subject of which was a large cross, erected just over the chancel. Then a new harmonium was got in

place of a wretched old "spinet," which had previously done duty for an organ, and a choir was regularly established from amongst the school children that sang the responses in church now every Sunday, its members clad in little dirty white surplices.

He was all in favour of ceremonials, was the Reverend Herbert Pringle; and although he perhaps "meant well" according to his judgment, he was very affected, and "High Church" all through the service—to the intense astonishment of the farmers and poor labourers, who used to wonder at the new style of worship adopted in their old church, and be perplexed with all the bowings and genuflections, and especially with the white-surpliced choir.

To give him his due, however, he did not preach a bad sermon, and had a very effective way of appealing to the pockets of his hearers

which the craft glory in, asked at once to be shown over the house. He examined every hole and corner as if he thought Susan had been purposely stowed away by the members of the family. When he was satisfied with an inspection of the house and garden, giving especial care to examining the various locks and appurtenances of the gates, he appeared to think profoundly for a short time, when he asked to be shown the clothes which Susan had left behind her. These gave him immense gratification, for he turned them over and over again, giving vent to sundry Lord Burleigh's shakings of the head, and portentous "humphs," as if he had the whole thing in his mind's eye.

Detectives, my dear sir, or madam, are not by any means such sharp personages as writers of fiction generally love to depict.

There are some especially "cute" members of the force I don't for a moment deny; but as a class their knowledge and acquirements are fearfully exaggerated. Indeed, I must be so severe as to call them at once, humbugs; but they deceive themselves quite as greatly and as often as they deceive the public, and are by no means so sharp as the malefactors they are set to catch. I think a clergyman I once knew would have made a far better detective than a good many real *mouchoirs* I have come across. He had the gift of at once divining at the truth, investigating the morality and ethics of his parishioners which not one detective in a hundred possesses. They put on a great deal of mystery, and appear to "know all about it," but they are really much more shallow conjurers than Herr Frickell when, turning up

know un? Whoi, thet's the porsun's seestür; that be Missy Pringle, Measter Tummus!"

"Thank you, George," answered our hero; and how over-joyed he felt as he walked along after the others. He knew Pringle well, although he was not aware that he had a sister; and "of course I can easily get introduced," he thought very naturally.

The following Monday, strange to say, Tom begged Markworth to excuse him for some little time, as he had to pay a visit, and he set off alone to the parsonage.

Naturally he was "only going to pay a regular call;" it was only proper that he should pay a visit to his friend Pringle, whom he had not seen "since last year, by Jove!" and to congratulate him on his ecclesiastical preferment. That was all! And so Master Tom rode up to the parsonage on one of the

old horses, which the dowager had retained in the stables—probably on account of its not being fit for farm-work—the very next morning after seeing Lizzie.

Pringle was glad to see him, and his sister was introduced to the “young squire,” who tried to make himself as agreeable as possible, but was painfully embarrassed during his entire visit; and yet, before he had gone away, Lizzie thought him “such a nice fellow,” and she was “oh, what a darling” to him.—The two young things were drinking deep draughts of love which were intoxicating them and drawing them nearer and nearer to each other in a sort of rose-coloured Paradise, which the mere presence of the one conjured up to the other. And then he had to go, and it was pleasant to go, merely to have those taper fingers in his, which pressure sent a thrill of

sweet electricity through his frame, while even she trembled and blushed—and then came the pang of parting.

On the morrow, he had to come and see “Pringle’s new fishing rod,” and show him his own, for it would be so jolly to fish from the lawn at the back of the parsonage, that ran down to the little river which contained such capital perch! and of course he could not help meeting her again, and she wanted to see the “poor little fish that were caught!”

Bless you, my darling, there were other fish caught that morning besides perch! How hackneyed, and yet how novel are the windings and twistings in the fairy land of Love’s Young Dream!

It was all over with them.

## CHAPTER VII.

## "SOWING THE WIND."

THE nominal week, which had been mentioned as the duration of Markworth's stay at The Poplars, passed pleasantly enough for Tom at all events. So pleasantly indeed, that he did not keep count of the days as they glided by, for he was continually dropping in at the parsonage "to see Pringle," and was, long before the following Friday arrived, over head



and ears in the little pit of love which Lizzie's bright eyes had excavated in his heart. The dowager was still trotting about grinding down her tenants, and laying up riches which she did not know who would gather. Miss Kingscott had made the best use of her opportunities in two short interviews which she had had with the somewhat amorous doctor, and had yet contrived to cast sheep's eyes on the young squire, whom she had hopes of captivating ; while Markworth was steadily trying to gain the confidence of the poor half-demented girl, around whom he had already set his snares. All, all the members in fact of our drama, were recklessly engaged in the vineyard of Æolus, all were with lavish hand sowing to the wind, never dreaming of the crop they should reap.

Susan Hartshorne's strong passion for music

had early been taken advantage of by Markworth as a means towards the end he had in view.

Music was, strange to say, for such a character, one of his fortes, indeed it was a hobby with him ; and he was not only a first-rate player in the mere sense of mechanical dexterity, but was also a thorough musician at heart.

The pathology of the human mind is a wonderful and intricate study, and it is a remarkable fact, with all our spread of knowledge and science, with the vast new fields of thought which are freshly opened every day in the educated world, what trifling advance we have made in the analysis of the main-spring and moving power that sets in motion the train of thought itself ! Medical jurisprudence has only of late become a special

study, and the psychology of the human mind, one of its most important branches—more than a mere ramification as it is often held—is at best only a dead letter as yet to those who affect any acquaintance with the subject. Mental insanity is one of those topics, like the physiology of dreams, which embraces a large area for research and investigation; and even the best and latest of the physicians who have made this division of medical knowledge their especial field for enquiry, confess to what a very short distance their knowledge carries them. Hence, until very lately, not only was there no remedial treatment pursued, but arbitrary incarceration, strait-waistcoats, and chains, comprised all medical procedure towards our lunatics. Thank goodness, however, the broad light of science, reason, and

common sense, has tended to dispel the black ignorance displayed by our forefathers towards our mental as well as bodily ills. Formerly drastics and phlebotomy, adopted alternately, were supposed to cure every disease and ailment of the human body, but that day is past now; and, so as in surgery and physic, a new path has been opened for the treatment of insanity. It is yet in its infancy; but many species of mania now deemed hopeless will before long, probably, succumb before judicious and efficacious ministering.

One of the most hopeless forms of insanity, according to eminent authorities on the subject, is melancholia, but even this gives way under proper treatment. In cases of this kind, patients are but too often neglected, and the cure is left, ignorantly, to work out itself, which generally ends unsuccessfully;

whereas, if the patient under treatment were led out of themselves as it were, their affliction ignored, and treated to just the company and influences which appear to affect them most, I believe in nine cases out of ten of so called settled melancholia, the unfortunate sufferer would be turned out cured after a time.

Susan Hartshorne was suffering from this species of mental infliction. Her case certainly was not a very extreme one ; and if she had been removed from her home at the time she first lost her wits, and been under gentle treatment and care (as Doctor Jolly recommended) instead of being kept at the place where all her surroundings, and especially her mother's presence, kept the great fright she had undergone continually before her, she would have been cured long since. Even as it was, she was every month gaining

fresh mental stamina from the outside influences at work upon her: now that Markworth specially devoted himself to her, as he did, and gradually caused her budding intellect and intelligence to expand instead of warping them, she changed more and more for the better every day. Markworth told Tom that he was interested in the case—as indeed he was on more accounts than one—and if left to himself he would cure her completely. The mother, too, seemed interested, as she could not but perceive the change in Susan, and thanked Markworth in her way, by dropping some of her brusquerie, and also by avoiding her daughter so as not to frighten her, and make her shrink back within herself by her presence and appearance.—Markworth had drawn her attention to the point. As for Miss Kingscott, of course in fulfilment of

her compact, she did not interfere with him at all, and allowed him to mould her charge as he pleased, although she watched him narrowly, and bided her time.

Allynne Markworth had now become domesticated to a certain extent at The Poplars. The first week flew away rapidly, even with him, he had so much to plan, and to take such pains to get his plot *en train*; while with Tom the time had disappeared since he knew Lizzie as one day. Mrs. Hartshorne, too, was so glad to have her son at home, although she seemed rather unsympathetic mother, that she tolerated Markworth at first for his sake; and he had played his cards so well, and studied her little weaknesses so fully, and kept himself so much out of the way, that she at length looked upon it as a matter of course that he should

remain when Tom hinted at stopping. "It is such nice weather," explained that young deceiver, "and so jolly down here, Markworth, and the Inskips are coming down this week, that I wish you would stay on—that is, if you are not fearfully bored with us all." It was very strange, was it not, that Tom had not remembered the fact of the Inskips coming down before?

"Not at all, my dear fellow," answered Markworth; "I like this place very much; and your mother and I get on very well now, although she did not certainly like me at first;" he could not help laughing over the recollection of his first meeting and introduction to the dowager, Tom sharing in his merriment.

"Well, I am glad you will stop. It is much better here than being in town, and I



begin to like a country life," observed Tom, thinking of violet eyes and pastoral rusticity.

"So do I, Tom; it is far better than all the racket we could have up in London. I am very glad I came down, but we'll, no doubt, have lots of gaiety when the Inskips come—not that I care about it, for I am really interested in the case of your sister."

"Thank you, old fellow; I am sure you are very kind to take all that trouble about Susan. Well, it's agreed that we stay on now that we are here, at least for a week or two. My leave won't be up until September, and even then I daresay I could get an extension, for the colonel's an old trump."

"Agreed," responded Markworth; "when you are tired of me you can turn me out, you know, but I daresay the old lady would take that trouble off your hands." And they both

laughed again at such a possibility, which without joking the dowager was fully capable of doing by herself. And so their stay at The Poplars was decided upon, and Markworth had plenty of time in which to perfect his plans.

Susan's love of music had done much, probably, to preserve her mind from altogether closing up within itself: and her fondness for gardening and flowers was also beneficial to her case.

The first, Markworth had perceived at once; and he quickly set to work upon that foundation to gain a hold upon her, and draw her out of herself.

He used to go up-stairs to the old room where the organ was, and play some of those wonderful fugues of Beethoven, and saddening chords from the "Lieder ohne Worte," that

would nearly make angels weep ; and the affected girl used to follow him, and draw near, as if spell-bound, whilst he was playing, and try and imitate him after he had left his seat before the keys.

Then he began to speak gently to her, only, perhaps, a sentence now and then, for she was fearfully timid and frightened of strangers, but after a time she learned to know him, and would reply. No sort of conversation, of course, could be carried on with her, for her intellect was just like that of a young child's, although she had learned things by wrote, like a parrot, and could imitate whatever she saw another do. After a time she would voluntarily seek Markworth, and ask him to play the organ in her pleading way ; and she would sit quietly for hours to hear him. If he smiled on her she looked happy : if he frowned, or

raised his voice, her face would wear a tearful and frightened aspect.

The garden used to be one of her favourite resorts. Here she would wander up and down before Markworth came, speaking to herself, as if she were carrying on a conversation with someone else. Here she had flowers of which she was passionately fond, treating them as if they were living things, and crying over them should a leaf be broken off, or a branch blown down. Old George used to take especial pains over "Missy's" garden, and she always used to go out and watch him at work, and be continually inciting him to dig up the earth around her plants. When Markworth began his care, however, Susan changed a great deal in her habits. She at first gave up the garden, and only would go to the organ-room; but when he brought a flute out and used to

play an air of which she was especially fond, in and about her favourite haunts in the shrubbery, she got to come out again, ceased her imaginary dialogues, and grew more expressive and brighter. Insane people always seem affected by wind instruments.

Markworth took care, however, never to play the flute when the dowager was about the premises, as she "hated that odious tooting thing even worse than the jackass that played it"—she said.

Miss Kingscott used to accompany Susan, and consequently the three were very much together, for Tom was nearly always out now by himself, as he could not get Markworth to accompany him to the Pringles; and when he was at home he used to flirt with the governess under his mother's very nose, and leave Susan even more in Markworth's hands.

The devil, they say, is never so black as he is painted, and, perhaps, Markworth was not altogether so selfish or so wicked in his motives as one might suppose. He was really interested, deeply so, in the peculiar case of Susan Hartshorne ; and having read a great deal on insanity and its cure, he had certain theories of his own on the subject which made him glad of the opportunity for reducing them to practice. If he had not known that the poor girl was the heiress to twenty thousand pounds, and had not circumstances so strangely placed Clara Joyce—he could not think of her even by her new name—in the house to assist him, he would never have dreamt of his plot, nor have attempted to carry it out after he saw the subject, or rather object, of it ; and yet, perhaps, he would still have tried to put her

in the way of recovering her reason without a thought of recompence. As it was, he was now working with a double object, and the success which he met with startled him, while it emboldened him to persevere in his design.

In a short time there was such a perceptible change in Susan that anyone not in the habit of seeing her frequently would have noticed it at once; and soon she was altogether different from what she had been. Her eyes began to have some expression in them; how different they looked from their former dull appearance; and she would now look anyone in the face instead of hanging down her head as she formerly did. Dr. Jolly was one of the first to perceive the alteration, and complimented Miss Kingscott on the change one day.

“Bless my soul, ma’am! why, nobody would recognise her again. It’s positively wonderful. By Gad! madam, you deserve a medal for it. I would not have believed such a change could have taken place unless I had seen it myself.”

Whereupon Miss Kingscott half declined the credit of the cure, but in such a way as to make the doctor repeat his compliments.

“Bless my soul, ma’am! it’s no use telling me that, I know better. It’s wonderful, and you deserve every credit—yes, ma’am, by Gad! ma’am, you do. Good-bye, Miss Kingscott; I shall call soon again to see your patient, for she is yours now, you know, ma’am. Go-o-od-morning.”

And the doctor took himself off, with an elaborate farewell adieu. He would have



kissed his hand, it is believed, only that the old dowager was standing looking out at the window, and might have called him an old fool as likely as not.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## DAMON AND PYTHIAS.

HE is not a very romantic Damon is Doctor Jolly, nor is he at the present time to be seen under favourable circumstances, or in the most picturesque of situations.

The fact is, Dr. Jolly has got an attack of the gout, "his old friend," as he calls that hereditary and choleric disease; and here he is, seated in his snug parlour—he

knew how to live well and be comfortable did the doctor—with his feet in a pail of cold water, like Patience on a monument smiling at grief; (one can't help quoting the "noble bard.") He was pursuing a rather violent method for reducing the inflammation in his pedal extremities in order that he might be able to go out and pay his usual pharmaceutical round of visits, and he was writhing and swearing inwardly, most probably, and often aloud, from the pain of the gout and remedy combined.

"Bless my soul! Deb!" he exclaimed, as irascibly as his natural good temper would allow, to his sister Deborah, our Pythias, who was in the room along with him. "Bless my soul! Whew! what a twinge. Confound the gout, Deborah!"

"Confound it with all my heart, Richard,

if it will do you any good," she replied, calmly, drawing the thread through the heel of a stocking which she was darning; "but you know, Richard, it's your own fault. You *will* drink that port wine, and you must take the consequences."

"Bosh, Deb; don't preach. Why, I only drank two glasses yesterday at lunch, and—"

"How about the bottle after dinner?"

"Well, you know, Pringle was here, and hospitality you know, Deb, hospitality you know—"

"Hospitality won't preserve your health, Richard."

"True Deb, quite true; but I couldn't help it, and the gout's getting better now, the pain's nearly gone. Whew! there's another twinge. Confound the gout, I say!"

Damon was a stout, florid, jolly-looking—

there is no other word so expressive—man of forty-five or thereabouts; Pythias — some apology is due for her sex in carrying out the classical metaphor, although when you know her better you will acknowledge the propriety of the allusion—was some five years the elder, as she could look back with complacency or otherwise on her fiftieth birthday. She was tall and ungainly, and her face was so set and deficient of mobility that it looked as if it were carved out of mahogany, to which wood indeed its colour bore some resemblance. She evidently took after her male parent more than her mother, and her brother was right when he called her a “chip of the old block.”

Damon was genial and hearty; Pythias cold and formal, as befitted an austere virgin of her years; but both possessed the same kind heart, and you would rarely find such a

good-natured pair, who were so fond of each other, and so considerate and charitable in every sense of the word, to those around them.

Doctor Jolly was emphatically one of the jolliest country-practitioners in the country, and had one of the best practices, and was better liked than any other disciple of *Æsculapius* in the county. For miles round the farmers and well-to-do, as well as poorer people, knew his pleasant weather-beaten face and hearty voice. He “was so sociable and pleasant-like,” as the country folk would say; and his well-known portly form—he rode about sixteen stone—and cheery “How de-do!” used to be eagerly welcomed when he came riding round on his thorough-bred heavy-weight hunter, with his two favourite little black and tan terriers, “Huz, and Buz his brother,” scudding at its heels.

He and his sister had lived together at Bigton for many years past. The doctor had succeeded his father, and he his father, as far back as lay within the memory of "the oldest inhabitant"—the practice with its connection having been kept in the family for nearly a century.

Bigton is a very quiet rising little watering place, situated some five or six miles from The Poplars and Hartwood village, at the mouth of the river, wherein Tom Hartshorne was catching his perch under the eyes of Miss Lizzie. Bigton is by no means an ostentatious sort of place: it lacks self-assertion, and is content to occupy a back seat, as it were, in the assembly of "Fashionable Resorts," when, if it would but only put itself forward it might be bidden to "come up higher."

It is really a pleasant little place, and has all the requirements to make it an agreeable retreat for the hot summer months, when one longs for the seaside with that intense ardour which only a Londoner knows. Bigton has a pier—a shabby little pier it must be confessed—a sort of esplanade, which is as long as that of its Brobdignagian rival, where George's Pavilion, that hideous monstrosity, used once to attract admirers—an excellent beach of fine grey sand, and a splendid common, all covered with gorse and furze, whereon juveniles can play "the criquette," as Monsieur Jeune France calls our national game. Beyond that, it has a splendid country around for jaunts and pic-nics; and, as for antiquities, why, is it not within a decent drive of one of the most historic old castles in the kingdom, a castle which has its ancient old keep still in preser-



vation, and which was one of the few Royalist strongholds that held out successfully against the Puritan general and his myrmidon Round-heads?

Yet, with all these advantages, Bigton has not yet become a favourite with the multitude who annually adjourn to the seaside, and this neglect is not by any means complained of by the quiet few who wish to avoid the racket of a fashionable watering place, and come down here in order to have a quiet enjoyable holiday. The fact is, Bigton reckons for its standing more upon the support of its residents than on stray birds of passage; and, of these, it has a larger proportion perhaps than some of its better known and more highly cracked-up rivals. It has nice trim rows of terraces facing the sea, and plenty of comfortable detached houses which are generally let to

people who stay for months, and even a year or two, instead of hiring for merely a six week's occupation. Bigton is therefore busy all the year round, instead of having a season of three months, and being a necropolis for the rest of the year: indeed, the annual visitors who come down in summer do not alter the look of the place much: it is too respectable a town to bother itself about casual tourists or London holiday-makers. In the summer the landholders and great people of the surrounding country come from their inland homes, and take lodgings for the bathing: so Bigton is very exclusive and keeps entirely to its own set.

Among not only the residents—returning to our story—but also the regular visitors, Doctor Jolly was a general favourite, and the doctor supreme of the locality; and

he was as good a surgeon and physician as he was a favourite. He was not the man to nurse a hypochondriacal patient by giving him various bottles of medicine containing coloured water, or pills "as before," consisting of harmless dough. No, he would tell them to get out and take plenty of exercise and mayhap dip in the sea, and above all to get good food and plenty of it. No gruel and arrowroot from him. "All d——slops and dishwater," he would say ; but a mutton chop three times a day, and a glass or two of really good port wine. "Stop, I'll send you over some of my own, and you may bet your boots that that's prime stuff," he would offer with a knowing wink of his eye, riding off to escape a denial.

He was a jolly, good-natured man, and such a really good minister to the ills of

human nature, that he had it all his own way at Bigton, and almost throughout the entire county. His practice was so large, that he had to ride miles every day to do justice to his patients ; and yet he would hire no assistant, except a mild, gentlemanly pupil, whom he kept to do the home business in his surgery.

“ Catch me !” he would say, “ having a fellow to cut me out with all the pretty girls and old ladies ! No, sir, as long as I can cross a horse, no other sawbones shall rule here but myself. I’m hanged if they shall, sir ?”

One or two other medical men had tried rashly to set up to him in opposition at Bigton ; but never getting anyone who was ill to patronise them, they had to give up at length in disgust. One, indeed, still hung on, as he

had bought a house and could not sell it ; but he had to take to the coal trade to support his family. Not that Doctor Jolly grudged him a living, for no matter what he said, he would cheerfully have lent his brother practitioner a helping hand ; but then no one would let anyone else visit them in Bigton but our Damon, so the poor—Othello's—occupation's—gone—M. D. had to buy and sell chaldrons of the best Wallsend and Seaborne, and fed his family in that way.

Dr. Jolly's house was one of the best and nicest kept mansions in Bigton, for the doctor loved to live well, as he could afford it ; and his sister Deborah was one of the most valuable housewives that could be cited. It was a long, low, old-fashioned house, with a splendid garden and paddock adjoining, for the doctor's horses, of which he kept three—

he used to follow the harriers in the time of the old squire, Roger Hartshorne—but he was getting too heavy for that now, besides having too much to do. Now he was devoted to poultry and pet deer, pet hares, pet dogs, pet animals of all kinds, even cats, and had all his out-houses, yards, and paddocks filled with his various adopted nurslings.

It was a wonder, considering his disposition, that he had remained a bachelor so long; but then he had his sister Deborah to take care of him, and as he would say, “Bless my soul, man, what more do I want?” His old friends who had known him for years would hint at a disappointment in early life; but I don’t think care sat heavily on the doctor’s brow, as it does on some of us, for he lived well, and enjoyed life as he found it, and did not seem inclined to give up his pre-

sent life for all the unknown sea of troubles into which matrimony might plunge him. Perhaps he saw too much and too many of the gentler sex to hazard a selection, but the probable reason was that he was too comfortable as he was. He and his sister pulled along capitally as Damon and Pythias, as they had in fact done all their lives; both were freely out-spoken to each other; and if Deborah had the pre-eminence within, the doctor was master out of doors.

The doctor relished good 'cheer, and gave capital dinner parties, as he was the most hospitable man in the county. He had had one the evening before, and hence his slight attack of the gout; its invariable consequence this morning. He said he had inherited the aristocratic infliction from his sire, along with a good digestion and his practice;

but perhaps Pythias, or Deborah, was not far wrong in ascribing it to his love of good living and partiality for port. The gout made him swear a little, but he did not really mean anything by it: if all our oaths were as harmless as his, the recording angel who watches over that special failing of human nature would have a sinecure.

“Confound the gout, Deb!” he exclaimed, as that sharp twinge caught him in his left foot, and made him writhe with ill-concealed agony. “Confound the gout! I’ll drink no more of that infernal port! that is,” he added, shortly afterwards, as the pain subsided, “not beyond a glass or two at lunch; and perhaps a bottle after dinner, eh, Deb? Ho! ho! ho!” And he laughed his jolly cheery laugh, as he took his feet out of the tub of water, in which they had been hitherto re-



posing; and, drawing on his boots with difficulty, prepared himself for setting out on his morning round of visits.

"Better now, Richard?" enquired Pythias, as he stood up fully caparisoned in the matter of his lower extremities.

"Yes, Deb, all right now; the plaguery thing has gone away for the present, and won't trouble me again till next time. My 'off stepper' is somewhat sore still, but it'll be as sound as sixpence by the time I get back."

"Are you going far, Richard?"

"Well, I think I'll pay a call at the dowager's, and all about Hartwood; and as I shan't be back in time for lunch, I'll drop in and feed at Pringle's—uncommon pretty little girl his sister is. Bless my soul! Deb, she's enough to make one think of marrying,

although I suspect that sly dog Tom Hartshorne's after her—we old fellows have got no chance."

"Take care, Richard. She would probably jump to have you. I know what girls are! But how is that poor girl Susan Hartshorne getting on?"

"Really, Deb, do you know I think she has been looking much brighter lately. I have observed this within the last week or so—there is a decided change for the better. She has lost nearly all that frightened look she used to have; and I would not be surprised if she eventually recovered her mind. It's a sad pity, Deb, bless my soul! a sad pity! She was a nice child—confound that old woman! and she's now such an interesting-looking girl—a sad pity that old hag frightened her senses away."

“What do you think is the reason of this change in her?” asked Deborah.

“Well, I can hardly tell, Deb ; you see, Tom has been down, and there’s that friend of his, too—don’t like him—and she has seen more company than usual—all these things may have something to do with it ; but I think that the improvement is all due to that new governess, Miss Kingscott—by Jove ! she is a fine girl if you like, a—”

“Take care, Richard, take care !” she said, as Doctor Jolly went out of the room, after poking about vainly in every direction for his gloves.

He mounted his horse which the groom held at the door, and as he rode away, he murmured to himself, “Dooood fine girl ! I wouldn’t be surprised if the artful jade caught me after all !” And off he cantered down the

street, bowing affably, and waving his hand with a cordial "How-de-do!" to everyone he met, for he knew everybody, on his way to Hartwood.

## CHAPTER IX.

## AN OLD CAMPAIGNER.

THE London season had ended : so Lady Inskip, having packed up her baggage wag-gons, gathered her *impedimenta* around her, and mustered her forces, consisting of her two grown-up daughters, her only son, a young imp of twelve summers ; her maid, a knowing abigail ; and lastly, though by no means least, herself—put her regiment in marching

order; and sallied down with metaphorical bands playing and colors flying to the quiet little watering place of Bigton, to prosecute a sort of son-in-law-hunting war during the summer solstice.

For be it known, Lady Inskip was a campaigner—one, too, who had fought many a fray on many a field, from the era of her first battle when she had, with an equally adept old mother for an ally, striven for a husband and a title, and an establishment in life, and had won the three combined in the person of her departed spouse, the late Sir John O’Gaunt Inskip, Bart.—down to her last little skirmish in Mayfair, where she had attempted to float off her two remaining daughters—her eldest she had gotten rid of handsomely some time before. She had then and there been routed disastrously, before she could draw up

her forces for a regular pitched battle ; but it was not her fault, or from lack of perseverance or want of judgment on her part, as she had been unable to fix upon any special young or old gentleman—it did not matter which—whom she deemed or doomed as eligible for her matrimonial projects.

She was not daunted, however : not she ! She was too old and experienced a campaigner for that, and had regularly changed her front mapped out her *carte du pays*, and planned out an entirely new disposition of her forces before coming down to Bigton. She contemplated a bold stroke, somewhat like Napoleon's procedure at Austerlitz, or, better still, his invasion of Egypt ; and had determined to follow the tactics of other experienced commanders, and "carry the war into Africa."

It was not a very colossal adversary against

whom she schemed and plotted, and collected such munitions of war—it was only Tom Hartshorne—poor Tom, whom she had met in London, and who seemed inclined for a mild flirtation with her pensive Laura, and lively, not to say “larky,” Carry—especially at the last Woolwich Artillery ball, when his attentions had been “really quite marked!” That unfortunate young officer having sauntered through a quadrille with Laura, and told the exuberant Carry, after a waltz, that she was “a stunner to go.” He certainly, however, criminated himself to some extent, by calling the next day at their house in town, and playing pretty to, and chaffing both girls.

Mr. Thomas Hartshorne she had found out—strange what wonderful perspicacity and knowledge of the means, standing, and expectations of wooers and would-be sons-in-



REV. MOTHERS WITH MARRIAGEABLE DAUGHTERS  
 HAVE—WAS IN A VERY GOOD POSITION, AND WAS  
 THE PRESUMED HEIR TO THE PRESENT PROPRIETORSHIP  
 OF THE FORTUNE.

SHE HAD MADE UP HER MIND, THEREFORE, TO  
 SECURE HIM IN ALL RESPECTS FOR ONE OF HER  
 "DEAR, DARLING, SONS." HE WAS, CONSEQUENTLY,  
 THE OBJECT OF HER PRESENT VISIT TO BIGTON. TOM  
 WAS THE GAME MARKED DOWN *in esse*, ALTHOUGH  
 GOODNESS KNOWS WITH THE HOPEFUL GROUND OF  
 A WATERING-PLACE TO WORK UPON, AND ITS HETERO-  
 GENEEOUS CROWDS OF VISITORS, AND ITS ROMANTIC  
 OPPORTUNITIES, WHO AND HOW MANY, WITHOUT  
 AGITATING MORMONISM, MIGHT NOT BE THE  
 VICTIMS *in posse*!

LADY INSKIP WAS THE WIDOW OF A SCOTCH  
 BARONET, WHO HAD MARRIED HER FOR HER GOOD  
 LOOKS RATHER THAN HER FORTUNE—UNLIKE THE  
 GENERALITY OF HIS COUNTRYMEN—for a very

limited trousseau was all she brought him ; and even now, some twenty years after her marriage, she was still what Doctor Jolly would, and did, call " a fine figure of a woman, sir, by Gad !"

Her two daughters were very nice, presentable girls ; Laura a sort of languid beauty, and Carry " gushing," and a trifle inclined to be fast. The boy, Mortimer, was an obstinate, headstrong, young cub, just of that age when boys are peculiarly obnoxious and always in the way and disagreeable. He was, naturally enough, the spoilt pet of his mother, and for a young baronet had all the graces and follies of the position which he would be required to fill. But we need not go on to particularise all the points of Lady Inskip's *ménage*.

Suffice it to say, that she came down to

Bigton very shortly after Tom had left town. You may wager a trifle, if you are inclined to woo Fortune in that way, that she was previously acquainted with his destination before she moved her Lares and Penates ; and now that she was here, you may depend that she would leave no stone unturned to secure her object.

She took a pleasant little cottage on the Esplanade, about half a mile or so from the town, for a year, and had it fitted up elegantly and decorated so as to make it a perfect bijou of a place. If you watch a spider, you will always observe what a magnificent web he spins before he hunts about or lays in wait for his prey ; see what a gorgeous centre-piece he has to his prismatic castle ! Depend upon it that the spider is certain that his parlour is well-furnished before he invites the fly to

“walk in,” as is detailed in the lines of the harrowing ballad sacred to childhood.

Well, Lady Inskip had a nice little house, nicely furnished, with a nice little garden all mignonette and passion flowers, and a nice little croquet lawn, where nice little games of flirtation could be played by suitable nice young gentlemen with her nice dear darling girls. In fact it was all “nice”—that adjective so dear to the heart of the gentler sex, and so lavishly used by them—and so the old campaigner having entrenched herself within these fortifications, continuing our military descriptive, prepared to battle for and on behalf her of two daughters Laura and Caroline, as aforesaid.

She had not been in the place two days, before she knew “all about everybody.” How Captain Curry Cucumber, who lived at

the big red brick house, "just as you passed the common, you know," was an old returned East India officer (and who was seventy years old if he was a day), was immensely rich, and had come home with a lac of rupees to marry and settle down. He had an "awful temper in course," as his landlady said, and swore dreadful at his "pore black man," but then he had a sweet yellow face, and his widow would be left very comfortably off. Then she learnt too of our old friend the doctor, how he was a gay young bachelor; and of course she found out all about Mrs. Hartshorne, and her place and her ways and her oddities. She learnt also of the Revd. Herbert Bringle, and his little church at Hartwood: and as he was a relative of the great Sir Boanerges Todhunter, and was a young man with a good

living, and probably had property of his own, she made up her mind to patronise him, especially as he was the protégé of the dowager.

Accordingly she and her tender daughters and the young Sir Mortimer attended divine service at Hartwood the first Sunday of her stay at Bigton, and she was so wonderfully pleased with the performances of the ritualistic rector—he was “so like that dear Aminadab, at St. Barnabas’,” that she made up her mind to go there always in future, and not to patronise the Reverend Jabez, of Bigton.

She met Tom after church. She was “delighted to see him,” and made him promise to call next day and bring the Reverend Herbert Pringle, on his mentioning that he was a great friend and a nice fellow,

The dowager having bundled out of church immediately the service was over, Lady Inskip had then had no opportunity to make her acquaintance, although she assured Tom she was "longing to know her," but as she was an old lady, she, Lady Inskip, said she would do herself the honour of paying a visit at The Poplars very shortly.

She was so glad to see Mr. Markworth, too, "quite an unexpected pleasure to see him down here," when she was really mortally afraid of that worthy, who she could readily perceive, with a woman's mental keenness of vision, had taken her measure and thoroughly understood her plans and tactics. Altogether Lady Inskip was delighted with everything, as, fortunately for her peace of mind, she had not seen the pretty Lizzie Pringle, and was unaware of Tom's present

infatuation about that young lady, which anyone "with half an eye," except those personally concerned, would have at once recognised.

She drove back to Bigton, in a very pleasant frame of mind, at peace with her daughters, herself and everything around her; and her smart little equipage—a park phaeton and pair of ponies—caused much excitement amongst the rustics along the road.

Master Tom, not being averse to renewing his flirtation with Miss Carry and her sister, notwithstanding his being enthralled by Lizzie, determined to pay a call at the Inskip's little cottage, on the Bigton esplanade, a morning or two after, and proposed to Markworth that he should accompany himself and Pringle.

"No, thanks," replied that gentleman,



"none of my lady schemer for me! Look out for her, Tom! She's an awful old pythoness, and would wheedle the devil himself into marrying one of her plain daughters. Why, she nearly caught Harrowby 'of yours' the other day, and I believe she came down here after you."

"Never fear, Markworth," answered Tom, as he went off to call on Pringle, in order to get him to go, and also perhaps to have a glimpse of Lizzie, to act as a sort of charm against witchery from the Inskip girls. "Never fear, my boy! I saw her game in London, and shan't be caught. But they are jolly girls, that little Carry is up to chaff no end; and they will make this place gayer by coming down. There'll be nothing but pic-nics and croquet presently, if I know them aright," and he walked off to get his horse,

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which George was grooming to make it look respectable.

Pringle was a very dapper little man. A perfect little exquisite, and no one was so particular as to the parting of his hair, the curl of his whiskers, and the general "nattiness" of his turn out, as himself. He had seen the fair Laura and Caroline in church, and their presence had lent a perceptible tone to the pronunciation of his "awe men," and the delivery of his sermon. He saw they were well dressed; but when he learnt that Tom knew them, and beyond that, that they were the daughters of a baronet, and their mother a "lady in her own right," he was most anxious to make their acquaintance. Lizzie told him laughingly not to lose his heart over the belles, and suggested that he would be quite irresistible

when she saw him so particular about the various points of his toilet this morning ; but he thought it no laughing matter, I can assure you. He had all the elaborate priggishness of a young man fresh from college, and was more bent on making an impression than on pleasing. To tell the truth he had mixed very little in the world, and the feeling of being a man and occupying a responsible position was quite a novel one to him.

He was ready long before the hour Tom had fixed for calling for him on his way to Bigton, and was walking up and down the verandah in front of the parsonage, waiting impatiently, and flicking the flies off his pony, which stood ready saddled for the start.


"By Jove!" he said (he had not been able to break himself of that expression, more suited to the laity, which he had picked up at

Oxford), "I wish he would come: we shall be too late!" and at that moment Tom rode in at the gate. After passing a little time speaking to Lizzie, who told him, too, not to "lose his heart," to which little shot Tom replied in a low voice—they had become intimate now, you see—that he had lost his already, which caused Miss Violet Eyes to blush, of course from sorrow; they at length rode off, and the promised visit was made to Lady Inskip, at Laburnum Cottage.

Poor Pringle was dreadfully embarrassed during the time he was under the eyes of the three ladies, and the "young imp" Mortimer caused him to lose what little self-possession he had, by making some observation on the parting of his back hair, asking him what was the perfume on his "rag," alluding to his pocket-handkerchief, and finally by playfully

pulling away his chair as he was going to sit down. He blushed all the time of his stay, although Lady Inskip was very affable to him, and the girls expressed the most intense admiration for his little church and all its belongings. The only easy moment he had when he could speak clearly was when "the darling girls," as their mother called them, came out on the lawn to admire his dapple pony, and called it "a little duck:" then Pringle had longed in his inmost heart to be that pony, for he was enraptured with the langour and beauty of Laura. Carry frightened him with her chaffy tongue, and by the way she went on with Tom, who seemed quite "at home," as he generally made himself at most places.

The young men left after a lengthy stay, and the ladies very naturally, canvassed them on their departure.



"What a nice fellow—regularly jolly fellow Tom Hartshorne is!" said Miss Caroline, "but the parson's a spoon!"

"My dear Carry!" interposed Lady Inskip, "I do really wish you would not talk in those horrid slang terms! It is quite shocking! Mr. Hartshorne is a very nice gentleman, of course, and I think Mr. Pringle the same thing. He's very quiet naturally; you cannot expect a clergyman, Caroline, to be as gay and 'jolly,' as you call it, as a young officer. I'm surprised at you, miss."

"He preaches delightfully!" observed the beauty languidly, "and I think him very nice; he was only bashful!"

"I suppose at the sight of you, Laura?" said the pert Miss Carry. "But he has one good point about him, and that is his pony. I wonder if it is up to my weight?" a very

natural enquiry, as she probably weighed considerably heavier than the owner of the animal, and was what an outspoken individual would have termed "a bouncer."

"I'm glad he's coming again; we shall have some croquet," continued the elder sister.

"Yes, my dears," said the mother. "We must make him at home; he's a very nice young man." She had already looked upon the Oxonian as "eligible," and was bent on making him a captive of her bow and spear.

"Well, for my part, I think him a donkey, and do not care whether he comes or not."

"Caroline! Caroline! Is this the return you make me for all I have done for you, and planned and schemed on my bended knees! ungrateful girl!" said Lady Inskip plaintively, as if she was going to cry.

"Oh, don't go on, ma, any more. We

know all that! Laura can have the white-choker if she likes: I will cultivate Tom."


"Bless you my child!" said the mother, "you are rash and impetuous, but you have a good heart."



## CHAPTER X.

## A CALL AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

DOCTOR JOLLY trotted along the road from Bigton to Hartwood, with Huz and Buz his brother, cantering at his horse's heels, and making short predatory excursions every now and then into neighbouring gardens and farm-yards on the way, to the apoplectic scaring and bewilderment of sundry unhappy fowls and ducks. In about half an hour, as he always



rode at a sharp pace, he had reached The Poplars to make his weekly visit.

"How-dé-do!" he shouted to Tom, when he was half a mile off, seeing him at the gate; and presently the stout doctor was dismounting from his quadruped with extreme difficulty, owing to the still painful gout, and limping up the steps of the dowager's mansion.

"So you are here again, are you?" observed that lady with her customary acrimony, from the open window of the dining-room, which faced the entrance gate. "Why, you're always running here, now; you'd better come and live here at once; it would, at all events, save your gouty legs some exertion."

"Bless my soul! Mrs. Hartshorne, why you are looking as blooming as a daisy. I wish I could wear like you, madam; why you must be sixty, if you are a day!"

"I'll out-last you at all events, Mister Jolly," said the old lady, as our friend the doctor, who hated being called "Mister" instead of by his medical title, walked into the house.

"And how's Susan?" he asked, as he entered the room.

"There she is with her governess, and you can see for yourself," snappishly returned the dowager, walking out, and leaving the doctor with Miss Kingscott and her charge.

Susan looked greatly improved, and timidly offered her hand as he went up to her in his hearty way.

"And how are we to-day?" he said kindly.

She, to his great astonishment, not only looked him in the face, but answered him, which she had seldom or ever done before.

"Very well, I thank you," she said, quietly.

It was not much, certainly; not more, perhaps, than a well-trained parrot might have said, but, then, it was a decided improvement to her former apathy. She immediately afterwards, however, left the room, as she heard Markworth playing on the organ up-stairs; and Miss Kingscott and the doctor were alone.

"By Gad, madam!" exclaimed the doctor, as soon as she had gone—he did not mean to give Miss Kingscott "brevet rank," but he always addressed every woman, young or old, as "Madam." "By Gad, madam! it's positively wonderful. What an improvement; couldn't have believed it if I hadn't seen it! But where has she gone to now—who's that thrumming the old organ?"

"That must be Mr. Markworth, I believe," she answered, "and you must compliment him on Susan's improvement: she's always with him, and he seems quite devoted to her. It is really quite charming to see them together."

Who would have dreamt of their joint conspiracy from the way she spoke?

"Really?" enquired our *Æsculapius*. "To tell you the truth, madam, I don't like that fellow at all. I'm never deceived in a face; and, if I do not make a mistake, madam, that man is a scoundrel as certain as God made little apples."

I do not know why it was, but the doctor always seemed desirous of connecting the name of the deity with miniature specimens of the forbidden fruit whenever he wanted to qualify a strong assertion.

"Dear me, doctor!" interposed the lady, "your language is very strong."

"Not a bit of it, madam; not a bit more than he deserves. By Gad, madam! he must have some object to gain; he would not take all that trouble for nothing. I know human nature, madam, and he is either going to marry the old lady, or something else. Ho! ho! ho! what a fine pair they would make!"

And the doctor sniggered over his own joke, and laughed so contagiously that Miss King-scott, could not but follow suit.

The doctor presently, however, returned to business. He had been thinking of this young lady all the way over from Bigton. He had asserted to himself over and over again that she was "a deuced fine girl," as if some one else had been disputing the point with him;

and now that he was in her presence she not only looked finer and more beautiful than ever, but he had one of the best opportunities for speaking to her alone he had ever had before, or could have wished for.

She looked very refined and ladylike as she stood there in the shaded dining-room, clad in a light morning dress. Her regular features and pale complexion gave an air of dignified beauty to her face which her height and figure well carried out. Altogether she was very charming, and looked so loveable on the present occasion, in appearance, that she would have captivated a man even less in love than the doctor, and led him on to the inevitable "pop!"

Æsculapius was a long time beating about the bush. Although he was generally free and easy in his speech, the doctor was now

tongue-tied when he most wanted to speak, and his already ruddy face was more "peonified" than ever—if I may be allowed to coin that word—while his heart thumped against his ribs "like a pestle against the sides of a pill mortar," as he expressed it professionally.

"Ha! hum! a fine morning, madam—a fine morning! Don't you think so?"

Miss Kingscott assented, of course. She saw his embarrassment, and wished to lead him on to an *éclaircissement*; but she could scarcely refrain herself from smiling at the ludicrous endeavours of the doctor to hide his nervousness, which was unmistakeably increasing.

"Yes, madam, it's a fine day; but hot, madam. Don't you think so?"

"Certainly, doctor, I think it is warm," answered the lady, confirmatively.



And, indeed, any one looking into his face could not but agree with the remark.

"Warm, madam, is no term for it, it is, confoundedly hot! But I beg your pardon, madam, were you ever in love?" he blurted out abruptly, after a great effort, bolting into his subject, as it were.

"Good gracious me, doctor!" said Miss Kingscott, with a charmingly acted surprise, and blushing embarrassment. "What a strange question for you to ask!"

"Not at all, madam—not at all. I said the weather was hot. Don't you see, madam? and it is hot. I asked you about love—and love is hot. There's my proposition, you see the connection between the two?"

And the doctor's face glowed with perspiration.

"I do not follow your argument," said the

governess, calmly. "You seem to arrive very rapidly at your deductions; but what has the result to do with me?" she asked, with ingenuous innocence.

"A good deal, madam—a good deal. How fearfully warm it is! You see, madam, before you an old man."

"Not so very old, doctor, I'm sure," she interrupted, looking bewitchingly into his perspiring countenance.

"Well, well," he continued, in a gratified tone, "perhaps not exactly an old man; but I'm not a young one. Still, if it wasn't for the confounded gout, I daresay I should be as young and skittish as the best of them."

"Oh! I'm so sorry for that horrid gout—and I do pity you so when I see you in pain," consoled Miss Kingscott, thinking of the doctor being "skittish," as if she had heard of an elephant dancing a hornpipe.

“Are you really—do you really?” he asked eagerly, a flush of joy overspreading his already flushed and perspiring face. “Well, I tell you what, madam, I’m in love.”

And the doctor heaved a portentous and languishing sigh, which quivered through his colossal frame which shook like a mould of jelly.

“Are you really, doctor? I am sure I hope the young lady is nice, for your sake ; and I hope she will make you a good wife,” she replied, ignoring the doctor’s nervousness until she got him to the point.

“You are very kind, madam, very kind ; but you are always kind—you can’t help it, for it is in your nature. Infernally hot, is it not, madam ?”

“Very warm,” said the lady, encouragingly.

“Bless my soul ! madam, so it is. But, madam, Miss Kingscott that is—”

"Well?" she encouraged him, her eyes sparkling with ill-concealed fun at the doctor's predicament.

"You sly little creature! Why, you are laughing at me all the time!"

"Oh! dear no; but who's the young lady, doctor? You have not told me her name yet, and I'm dying to know."

"You wicked little baggage! you know all the time."

"How can I? when you have not yet told me."

"By Gad! women are the most provoking creatures under the sun."

"Not *all*, doctor," she pleaded, demurely, tapping the carpet impatiently with her foot.

"Well, perhaps not all; but dooced near it. I am an old fool! Here am I bungling about and can't say what I mean!"

"Can I help you, doctor?"

"I wish you would, and tell me what to say to you, young baggage!"

"Do be calm, doctor. Suppose I'm the old lady now, and that you were talking to me—I am not so very young you know, either."

And she looked so demurely grave and elderly, that *Æsculapius* was charmed anew.

"Well, I must say it. It's better to have it out, like a bad tooth; there's no good in keeping it in my head. I'm an old fool I know, madam; but I am really in earnest now, and I want you to listen seriously to me for a moment. The fact is, madam, Miss Kingscott that is,—how fearfully warm it is!"

At that moment, just when he was trembling on the verge of his disclosure, the shrill tones of Mrs. Hartshorne's voice was heard without.

"George! George!" she cried to the faithful servitor (she pronounced his name indeed *Jodge! Jodge!* speaking in her usual rapid manner, with quick utterance). "Who's that at the gate? Don't you let anybody in, man!"

And our friends inside could hear her feet scrunching the gravel as she walked towards the gate in order to see who it was; so they went to the window also to look on, and the interesting conversation I have just detailed, was abruptly broken off at the indefinite point it had reached.

"Plaise, marm," replied the rustic voice of George, "it's a dadd, marm, and she says as how she's coomed to say, un!"

"I don't know any dadies, and don't want to know any, either; I wonder who is the

flaunting creature? Get back to your work, you grinning baboon ! I'll speak to the woman myself."

At the gate, seated in her pony carriage, and accompanied by her two daughters, all dressed out and equipped in their state-costume for the payment of calls, was Lady Inskip. She looked astounded—for she had heard every word of the dialogue between the dowager and her henchman ; and not only she had heard it, but her daughters also ; and the grinning page, covered with sugar-loaf buttons, who sat perched on a mushroom sort of seat that sprang out as a sort of excrescence from behind the equipage. The old campaigner was surprised and astounded : but she tried to appear cool and collected as befitted her dignity : the languid Laura was

as apathetic as ever; and the fast Carry seemed inclined to follow the Buttons example and laugh aloud.

The dowager, in another moment, was on the scene of operations, and addressed the campaigner who sat in her pony carriage, with her forces drawn up in *echelon* behind the gate.

"Who are you, woman; and what do you want?"

"My name is Lady Inskip," answered the veteran, with bridling dignity. "I presume I have the honour of addressing Mistress Hartshorne?"

"I don't know you—that's my name; what do you want, woman? My time is valuable, and I can't stop cackling with you all day."

"You might be a little more polite,



madam," said Lady Inskip, with freezing politeness and sarcasm. "I came with my daughters just to pay a customary call of civility, and I expected, at all events, to be treated like a lady, by a lady, whom I expected to meet here; but I now find out I am mistaken."

"Is that all? Then you and your daughters can just take yourselves off, with all your flauntings and finery! I don't want any grand people coming about me! I never go to see anybody, and I don't want anybody to come and see me. Quite a pity, isn't it, after you had bedizened yourself so finely too?"

"Laura!" exclaimed Lady Inskip, ignoring the presence of the dowager, "I think we had better drive home, and leave this vulgar woman to herself. Perhaps," she

said, turning to the dowager as she whirled the ponies round, "you will have the civility to give that letter to your son, it contains an invitation to a picnic. I suppose we need not hope for the pleasure of your sweet company?"

"I don't want any of your picnics, or jakanapes, or your impudence!" said the downright old woman, raising her shrill voice even more piercingly. "I will give the letter to my son. If he cares about running after you, *I* don't. Go! You said you were going home, and the sooner you go the better, for you don't come in here, my lady!" Then, considering the engagement terminated, she slammed-too the gate menacingly, and turned on her way back to the house, leaving the discomfitted campaigner to retreat at her leisure.

Our friends, the doctor and the governess, had heard the whole of the interview, and much amused they were over it, too, I promise you ; but it stopped the coming proposal. Miss Kingscott was rather pleased at this, for she thought there was still some hope of gaining over Master Tom, the young squire, and she did not wish either to finally accept or reject the doctor until she knew which was the best card to play.

He, on his way home, was also pleased that he had not fully committed himself.

“ It would never have done for Deb,” he considered ; “ she would never have liked it. At all events, I was just stopped in time, though, and a miss is as good as a mile. But I am a d—— old fool ! That’s a fact.”

He kept to his promise with Pythias, did Damon, and drank a bottle of port to himself

that day after dinner, shaking his head as he muttered to himself every now and then, while, with half-cocked eye, he held up his glass to the light—

“It’s a lucky escape; but I’m a confounded old fool!”

Twice he bethought him of telling Deborah all about it; but she looked so comfortable and composed, as she sat there darning his socks, that he thought it would be a pity to disturb and agitate her. So his dreams, when he retired to rest, were very wild indeed, and he passed altogether a sleepless night.—So much for the doctor’s love-making.

## CHAPTER XI.

## DES BEAUX YEUX.

No words can paint the mingled rage and mortification that filled the heart of Lady Inskip as she drove away from The Poplars, after her interview with the dowager.

"The Jezabel!" she said, in a voice of anger, "I've never been so scandalously treated in my life. You need not laugh, miss!" she fired out on Carry, who was exploding in

fits of laughter at the humorous nature of the rencontre. "You need not laugh, miss; it is no laughing matter to see your mother insulted! But what can you expect from a vulgar boor but abuse? I ought to have known that before I laid myself open to such treatment. I don't think I can ask that young Hartshorne to my house again after this."

"Good gracious! ma," said Carry; "why what has he got to do with it? I'm sure he's a very nice fellow, and he is not accountable for his mother's actions."

"Well," said the old campaigner, mollifying somewhat, as she got further from the scene of her defeat, and allowed her better judgment to prevail; "perhaps he's not to blame, and I am sure I never said so. He can come of course to the picnic, now he is invited;

but I am sorry I left the note with that old cat, after all. Never mind, it's done now, and there's no use in regretting it. He is a good match; and if you listen to my words, Carry," she leaned over and said confidentially to her daughter, so that Buttons might not over-hear, "instead of giggling so foolishly, and play you cards well, you will secure him in spite of that Jezabel, his mother. Not that I am afraid of her, or twenty like her," Lady Inskip said to herself consolingly, now that a distance of road lay between them.

But where was Master Tom all this while?

Well, you must understand that Mr. Thomas Hartshorne, of Her Majesty's Plungers, was, and had been all the morning, learning the craft of fly-fishing on the banks of the little stream that ran by the bottom of the parsonage, under the apt tuition of the

incumbent's sister. The young reverend himself had long since gone out for his parochial duties, such as enquiring after farmer Giles' rheumatism, and the widow Blake's asthma, intending also to do himself the honor of calling on Lady Inskip on his way home, for Pringle had been much struck by the charming Laura the more he saw of her, and wanted to see more still.

It was most surprising what a violent and indefatigable interest that previously indolent young man Tom had taken in the piscatorial art.

He who had before declared Isaac Walton an old humbug, and who had professed his agreement with the dogmatic old doctor Johnson's assertion, that fishing consisted of "a worm at one end of a rod and a fool at the other," now used to sally out every morn-



ing nearly from The Poplars, with his fishing-tackle on his shoulder down to the parsonage, telling Markworth, whom he used to faintly persuade to accompany him, that it was "the best sport in the world, old fellow."

He went to the incumbent's grounds because it was the "finest spot in the county for perch," and Pringle was "a brother angler, and such a jolly good fellow, you know." Those were his only reasons, of course!"

Hartwood parsonage was the beau ideal of a snug little country lodge; a long, straggling, one-storied cottage form of house, all ingles and corners and slanting roofs, and covered with roses, jessamine, and clematis.

It had low, diamond-paned French windows, opening down to the ground; so that one could walk out into the trim-inclined but wild planted flower garden--Lizzie's especial

pride—and on to the smooth velvety lawn beyond, that sloped down to the water's edge, bordered with hanging branches of weeping willows, and sappy, luscious, green osiers, that sprang like ostrich plumes from the quiet pools and crinks into which the stream widened here and there.

The parsonage had a "fine walled-in kitchen garden," as house agents advertise, devoted to spruce rows of cabbages and arrogant cauliflowers, each of which weighed more than a good-sized Christmas turkey; and fruit-clustered pear and apple and peach trees, all nailed up and trained along the walls, like a giant's palms spread out with the fingers extended. Beyond the kitchen garden the walls were overhung with rich green ivy, which took off the stuck-up appearance it might have had like most enclosures, and gave

the place a much more picturesque aspect. But it was in the flowery plaisance, marked out on each side by a thick laurel shrubbery, that Lizzie's handiwork shone out.

This commenced just under the windows of the house, round which it extended, and spread out to where it joined the lawn, from which it was separated by a sort of strawberry island, and a hedge-row of box, tall, up-grown, and cut in queer, fantastic shapes.

In Lizzie's flower garden, which she had specially looked after since she came to keep house for her brother, there was the most lavish display. Tiger lilies and jonquills, sunflowers and pale-faced narcissi, vied with each other for effect; and the great charm of the whole lay in the utter absence of any set form or arrangement—roses and lilies all grew together in the most charming confusion,

with sundry creepers twining around them ; it was only on account of there being no weeds visible, that you did not set down this wilderness of flowers to be totally neglected.

Other effects were not wanting to complete the picture. Here on a summer afternoon you would hear a pet robin punctually begin his sweet song, at "four of the clock precisely," from his favourite perch on a spreading fir tree that overhung the eaves of the house—a little robin that used to hop down every morning to the adjacent window of the parlour, to receive his matutinal crumbs from Lizzie's hand. The "chuck! chuck! chuck!" of the black bird too, would be also heard from the laurel shubbery ; and the rival strains of the yellow hammer from the neighbouring medlar tree. The latter gentleman would commence his lay with a

"whirr," like an alarm clock running down, and end with a sort of chorus like the concluding bars of "Green grow the Rushes O!" The Beccaficoes, too, or English ortolan, very like the thrush, would assemble here in the hot months of the year, and did not fail to leave evidences of their partiality for the fruit tree which received the Saviour's curse.

Tom Hartshorne had explored all this paradise long before, in the company of Miss Lizzie; and he was now, as I said, under her tuition, looking at her tying on some artificial May-fly or other ichneumon to his line.

It was a beautiful morning—not yet twelve—and the air was balmy, and scented with new-mown hay and flowers; while bees were buzzing around, and birds singing in the air, the lark, chief songster, above them all; altogether, Master Tom was situated under

very romantic circumstances, and his handsome Saxon face and honest blue eyes looked and shone out happy in the extreme.

Lizzie was dressed in a dainty little muslin dress, picked out with some lilac tinge, and her little hat was thrown on coquettishly, half off and half on ; while her bright pretty little face was unclouded, and there was a depth of tenderness in the deep violet eyes that glanced up every now and then to Tom.

She had just succeeded in tying on the fly, and looked up suddenly in a triumphant, saucy little way, in Tom's face. He was very close to her, for he had to watch very narrowly to see how the work was done, and he stooped at the time she looked up ; and she said, " There, sir ! "

They were very close together, and their eyes met, and Tom was stooping, and, natu-

rally, as those sweet little tempting rosebud lips were so near, he ——.

Well, what would you do if a very pretty girl was very close to you, male reader, under the same circumstances? What reply would you make?

Very well, Tom did it !

Just at that moment, Lady Inskip was driving round the road which skirted by the parsonage garden, to pay a visit, and leave an invitation, at the house of our friend, the young incumbent. It was not long after her encounter with the dowager, and Lady Inskip was still wrath : her observation being keen, and the pony carriage high, she could therefore see the little meeting between Tom and Lizzie over the wall.

She saw it all, my dear sir ; and her sense of propriety was so shocked, that, instead of



calling, as she intended, on the Pringles, she only left the invitation and drove on homewards.

Here she had been twice defeated this morning! The dowager had routed her at The Poplars, and "that artful little minx" had presumed to poach upon her manor—was actually making love to Master Tom, whom she had designed for her own Carry. It was absolutely startling! She did not know what to do. Fortunately, she thought, no one had observed the pleasant little episode in the garden—so indelicate!—but herself, as her daughters, riding on the front seat, had had their backs turned at the time, so she would keep it to herself, and determine what was to be done.

One thing, at all events, she resolved to do, and that was to speak to the Reverend Herbert



Pringle privately, and in confidence, about his sister. He was a most gentlemanly young man, and could not be offended at her mentioning the subject, especially as she would put it to him, since she was old enough to be his mother—at least, his mother-in-law!

Fortune favoured the old campaigner in her object. Our friend, the incumbent, having visited and cheered his poor people, by asking affably as to their healths, returned homewards by way of Laburnum Cottage, to see the Inskips, determining to himself that that was the shortest way round, although it was at least five miles out of his way.

Lady Inskip only arrived a few moments before him, and so he caught her when she was red hot on the subject just then rampant in her heart.

When she had flattered him sufficiently,

and after he had basked in the sunshine of Laura's smiles, he rose to leave, and Lady Inskip accompanied him herself to the door, and on to the grass plot beyond, and the gate, where stood his dapple-grey pony with his reins flung over the post to keep him from straying. When the girls saw their mother follow Clericus without, they made up their minds that she was going to "ask his intentions," and much did the lively Carry chaff her sister thereon. The campaigner's motive was, however, a very different one.

"You will excuse me, Mr. Pringle, I'm sure, but I am an old woman, you know, and I take such a motherly interest in you—(very motherly!)—that you will forgive me for asking you a question?"

Poor Clericus, himself, trembled at this introduction, as I believe his idea of what was

coming was very similar to those of the girls inside.

"Oh, certainly, Lady Inskip, certainly!" he said, with a sort of dead-alive alacrity.

"Is your sister engaged to Mr. Tom Hartshorne?" said the old campaigner; and Pringle was immensely relieved.

"Oh dear, no!" he responded, this time cheerfully enough. "Oh dear, no, Lady Inskip, what made you suppose so?"

And, thereupon, my lady spoke, and told what she had seen; and, although Pringle was not very angry at first, nor did he look upon the affair as anything serious, the campaigner presently persuaded him that it was his duty to speak to his sister. He, of course,—so she explained—could not be aware how a young girl would be talked about if she were allowed *carte blanche* to flirt with every

young man she came across. Poor Lizzie! as if she would have done so—and that it was very unfortunate the poor girl had no mother to warn her, and so on. But it was his duty as her brother, and not only on that account, but as a clergyman also—so the campaigner put it—to speak earnestly at once, and have the thing broken off.

Herbert Pringle promised to do so, and rode home very sadly, for he loved his little sister very much in his way, and hated the business of talking so seriously to her, besides not knowing how to set about it.

Let us return to our lovers; our poor tender sheep, into whose fold such a great gaunt wolf had now penetrated.

They did not hear the wheels of the old campaigner's chaise as it passed round by the garden wall, nor did they see her grim eyes

surveying them above it, and taking notes of their propinquity—not they !

When Master Tom committed himself in the way I have hinted at, little Lizzie blushed crimson, and hung down her head so that he could not see her face.

“ Oh, how could you ? How could you ? ” she stammered out, nearly crying.

“ Forgive me ! I beg your pardon : I could not help it ”—and Tom was going to tell his love, and disclose all the feelings that filled his heart, when, at that moment, my Lady Inskip rang the bell to leave her note, as already detailed.

Before Tom could catch her so as to hold her, Lizzie darted off, like a startled fawn, towards the house, and the opportunity was lost.

The next day she was not in when he called

round, and Pringle visited him the day after that, instead of his visiting him; and so, although he was not spoken to, no opportunities were put in the way of their meeting alone.

Both Tom and Lizzie were looking forward to the pic-nic with heartfelt longing, for the former, at least, determined to speak then.

Oh, Love! Love! When will thy course  
run smooth?

## CHAPTER XII.

“THE BEGINNING OF THE END.”

MARKWORTH'S plot was now nearly ripe for execution.

When he had been down at The Poplars some weeks now, he said one morning at the breakfast table that he must run up to town for a day or two, as he had some important business to transact; so excusing himself to the Hartshornes, mother and son, the former of

whom did not look as if she would break her heart if he never returned, he said he supposed he had better start at once and come down on the next day, Saturday, so as to be in time for the contemplated pic-nic on the following Tuesday, which Tom would not hear of his missing.

"You'll be sure to be back in time, old fellow," said the latter, as he wished Markworth good-bye; and the train glided off from the little station to which they had walked in company across the fields. "There'll be heaps of fun, for Harrowby and a lot of the fellows will be down, and I want you to draw out the campaigner, or she'll be making a dead set at me, and—"

"You'll have other fish to fry, and will want to attend to someone else, eh? I quite understand it all, my boy; I'm not so blind



as some people think, Master Tom. However, I'll spare your blushes and your explanations: don't be alarmed, my boy, I'll be back in plenty of time for the pic-nic, and will take care to occupy my lady's attention so as to leave you to your own devices. Good-bye, old chap."

"Good-bye, old fellow," said Tom; and Markworth was soon whizzing on his way to London.

Arrived in town, he first directed his steps to the private billiard room where he and his friend first made the acquaintance of the reader.

His object was to enlist the services of the little old-fashioned marker, who we had previously seen watching the game.

This man, Joe Begg by name, although only known to the sporting world who fre-

quented the room by his Christian name alone, was an accomplice and ally of Markworth. When our friend would manage to get hold of a nice pigeon for plucking, Joe Begg used to be of the greatest service. He had a peculiarly dexterous way of running up the score, and also a pleasant and most unaccountable manner of sneezing just when Markworth's opponent would be making some important stroke. It was most unfortunate of course, and the victim would meet with so much sympathy, and the marker would apologise so earnestly with tears in his eyes for the unfortunate cold in the head, "which takes me most unexpected, sir," as he would explain, that poor pigeon could not but allow that it was an accident, and accept the *amende honorable* by continuing his play. When neophyte

went away, after his vanity had been flattered by his being allowed *nearly* to win and his losing "rather hot, you know, by Jove?" he did not know that Markworth and the marker generally came to an understanding, which always resulted in the former offering and the latter accepting sundry substantial tokens of esteem and regard.

It was not to make use of his aid in the matter of billiards and by-play that Markworth now sought the company of Joe Begg. It was for something much more important and vastly different, although of a similar nature.

He wanted a witness for the contemplated marriage, and he could not think of anyone better qualified to assist him than Joe. He was just the man, for he had been always

faithful to Markworth's interests, and could be as "close as wax," although he would naturally require a "consideration."

"Well, Joe, how's business," he said, as he walked into the billiard-room, when, as was usual at such an early hour of the day, the marker was all alone.

"Very dull, Mister Markworth, very dull! Why, sir, I haven't made a bob at pool for the last three weeks. Everybody's out of town, and those City fellows as comes in are afeared to bet a tizzy on a dead certainty. Can I do anything for you to-day, Mister Markworth?"

"Not to-day, Joe; but I will want you shortly."

"All right, sir, whenever you want me you've only got to speak, and I'm there."

"I thought I could rely on you, Joe. The

fact is, I shall want you to be a witness to a marriage between a lady and myself."

"How much will you stand?"

"I'll do the thing handsomely. I tell you what, I will give you a fiver after it's all over, because I shall want you to swear to it perhaps in evidence afterwards."

"I'm your man, sir," replied the marker, with alacrity; "swear to anything for that sum. When is the little affair coming off?"

"I can't say yet, Joe. Maybe in a week, maybe not for a month; but when I want you I shall write here and let you know. Mind! You must be ready at once to accompany me when I write for you."

"I'm fly, sir," responded Joe, with a cunning movement of his left eyelid, more expressive than an ordinary wink. "I'll be ready any time; and perhaps, sir, as the

business is partickler, it'll be worth more than a fiver, who knows ?"

"I shan't forget you, Joe ; we won't quarrel about terms," answered Markworth, meaningly, and he then went away, for he had even more important arrangements to make.


He paid a second visit to the dingy purlieus of Doctors Commons.

This time not to the deed depository of the dead, but to the legal portals of Hymen, where Cupid sits enthroned on the bench, in all the majesty of the law, with a horsehair wig and a pair of clerical bands, to issue licenses to marry and for giving in marriage.

It was now Friday, and the pic-nic was to come off at Bigton on the ensuing Tuesday, so Markworth determined that he would manage to get Susan Hartshorne away from The Poplars on that day, as he would be less

liable to observation and detection; and taking her up to London, could have the marriage solemnised on the succeeding day. Tuesday, strange to say, was the very day, the 27th of August, according to the information of Miss Kingscott, retailed from the Family Bible, when the girl would be of legal age, one and twenty, and entitled to the free disposal of her money.

He accordingly got a license made out without much trouble, by means of a little stretch of the imagination—called perjury in courts of law—and the initiatory step for his design was taken. If everything went well, he would before that day week be the husband of Susan Hartshorne, and master of her twenty thousand pounds. He had well weighed every ~~step~~ in his programme; he had studied every ~~possible~~ consequence to himself; and he saw



no reason to anticipate failure when everything pointed to success.

After leaving Doctors Commons he went to some old lodgings of his in a retired street in Bloomsbury, where he was well known, and a set of rooms always kept vacant for him, for his comings and goings were so irregular that no one knew when to expect him. None of his West End friends knew of his ever living here, for he always gave an hotel as an address; and to tell the truth, he had often been comfortably installed in these same Bloomsbury lodgings when the world thought him travelling on the Continent, or shooting grouse on the moors.

His appearance was therefore looked upon as a usual thing, and no surprise was manifested; for his ways had always been inscrutable, and as he checked curiosity and



was a good and regular paying lodger, he could do as he liked. He had always done so from the first, and his landlady never bothered herself about him or his business, "it was no concern of hers, he always payed his rent, and that was all she cared about," she said.

He stopped here that night, and went away the next morning, telling Mrs. Martin, the landlady, that he was going to bring "his sister" to town on the following Tuesday, and would require the rooms to be ready for her reception. This was the first time she had ever heard of his having a sister; but he might have brought twenty so long as he paid his rent. I believe a regular London lodging-house keeper is more of a cosmopolitan than any other person in the world. She will take in anybody with a decent supply of log-

gage, and who is tolerably regular in the payment of his or her weekly bills—the wandering Jew, Calcraft, or Eugene Aram. It is all the same to the proprietors of the “apartments” whether her tenant be Jew or Gentile, gentleman or “snob,” criminal or honest man; she has but one standard for social position, morality or nationality, and that is a pecuniary one. A lodger may be forgiven everything, even seventy times seven, if he only pays his rent regularly; that is the *ultima ratio* to which appeal is made—it is practical and works well!

These preliminary arrangements being seen to, Markworth walked down through Lincoln's Inn Fields, across into Chancery Lane, and paid a visit to some dingy, tumble-down looking chambers close to the projected site for

the new Law Courts, which are to be built at some era dim in futurity. A brass plate was on the door, with the names "Solomonson and Isaacs, solicitors," engraved thereon.

His business was with the senior partner, who greeted him as an old client or customer, which indeed he was. Solomonson was not at all averse to transact business, even on the Jewish Sabbath.

"Vell, Mishter M," said the Jew, who was part money lender, part lawyer, and all rogue. "Doesh de leetel affairsh go on? Have you got de mad girlsh yet. I wants to see her Mishtressh M'sh—"

"Not. yet, Shylock; but everything's in train, and I shall do it before the week is out. But you told me right, I hope, about the law; I would not like to commit a felony?"

"You are all rightsh, Mishter M'sh. Leave de cashe in dese hands and ve vill see you trough!"

"I rely upon you then, and will let you conduct the whole affair,—but I must have some money to carry the thing through, Solomonson. How much can you let me have on my own security?"

"I vill letsh you ave two hundredsh pound. S'help me Gadsh, Mishter M'sh! itsh all I've got!"

"Nonsense, Shylock! you can't fool me like that," replied Markworth, and he tried unsuccessfully to get more out of the Jew. He had to be contented for the present with a couple of hundreds. Solomonson knew, however, the stake for which he was playing, and told him that as soon as he was really married to Susan Hartshorne he would

advance him more. Until then he would not let him have another penny. So Markworth was forced to content himself with what he had got, and he was not pleased when he recollected that he would have to give the governess half.

He was, however, provided with the sinews of war, so he wished Solomonson good day, cheerfully as he went out, and told him he would soon see him back again.

“ Good daysh ! ” replied the Jew. “ Don’t forget to send me the weddingsh cakesh, my dearsh ! I likesh weddingsh cakesh ! ”

The last visit Markworth paid before leaving London was to the curate of a small church in the city, with whom he was acquainted—how he had made his acquaintance I cannot say ; and to this gentleman he made some explanation about a forthcoming mar-

riage which appeared to be highly satisfactory to both parties.

Everything was now settled but the great event itself, and so Markworth returned to Hartwood by the afternoon train. To shew that he did not forget even trifles in considering everything for his plot, he bought an odd volume of the recently revived "Essays and Reviews," at the railway book stall, for the personal edification of the Dowager Mrs. Hartshorne, who had been speaking of the book in connection with her now favourite topic of ritualism. This he presented to her the same evening, much to her surprise, and peculiarly snappishly-expressed pleasure and thanks. The old lady had recently been over head and ears in pre-adamite geology, and nothing interested her so much as a secular essay on theological truths.

Tom was delighted to see him back in such good time, and planned out all sorts of pleasant things for the pic-nic, which was in everybody's thoughts—little knowing how Markworth intended to dispose of his day. All the Sussex world was going to be there. A pair of violet eyes comprised "all the world" to Tom now.

Some time that evening Markworth had a long conversation with Miss Kingscott, preparing for "the end." Both—strange anomaly!—had worked together for once, and not for good. He gave her a hundred pounds, the first instalment of the "hush money," and their compact was nearly completed.

To one who had not marked out every phase in Susan Hartshorne's treatment, the change that had been worked in her since Markworth had devoted his energies to her care, was nothing less than marvellous.

From dull, irksome melancholia the patient had been transported to the fields of reason. A constantly unchanged vacuity of expression on her face had given place to mobility of feature. Instead of void animal eyes, the windows of the soul now looked out of her face. From an idiot she had been changed nearly if not quite into a reasoning being. Markworth had done all this, aided by Miss Kingscott acting under him and by his directions. It is true the girl had only got back the germ of reason, the reason of a child in nature, and measured by the experience of years. But it was a germ which, although now of delicate growth, and requiring every fostering and care, might yet expand into the fullness of moral culture.

No one had any idea how poor Susan had improved, for she saw no one to speak to as



yet; and although Tom and Mrs. Hartshorne noticed some change in her, yet the former was too much engaged with observing another to notice much in his sister, and as for the mother she really, I believe, did not care either way. She had so long looked upon Susan as insane, that the possibility of her ever recovering her reason now after the lapse of so many years, was put beyond the pale of consideration altogether.

And so only Markworth and Miss Kingscott knew of her dawning reason; with them both she spoke now as sensibly as themselves, and as to Markworth she was his abject slave.

The first reasoning thought that filled the poor girl's vacuous brain was one of heartfelt devotion to him who had led her out of darkness to light. She looked upon him as her saviour, ignorant as she was of a higher and

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more powerful God than he ; and he was so uniformly kind and considerate to her, seemingly anticipating her every wish, that one cannot wonder at her slavish idolatry. He was her god—her all; she loved him as a dog would love its master, and everything he did was right: his word, law.

Markworth's material was now plastic enough.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## BROTHER AND SISTER.

“Now, Lizzie, I want to know what all this means?” said the Reverend Herbert Pringle, B.A., putting on quite a fatherly dignity of manner to his sister, an evening or two after Lady Inskip had spoken to him. “I want to know what all this means.”

Lizzie was at the time engaged lifting pots up and down, and poking about in her little

conservatory, which jutted out of the drawing room, with a trowel and watering-pot, in the manner peculiar to young ladies of a horticultural tendency. Her back was turned to her brother, so that he could not see her face, but a brilliant tinge of pink carnation coloured her little white neck, and suffused her dainty cheeks, and ascended even to the pure white forehead; still she steadfastly kept her head down, bent apparently on investigating the wonderful mysteries of some flower with a horribly long Greek name, which she was inspecting.

She must have guessed intuitively what her brother was going to speak about, but with a woman's noble gift of dissimulation, she asked, with an air of candour and conscious rectitude—little hypocrite !—

“ Why, Bertie, dear, what on earth do you mean ?”

They are all deceivers, every one ; bless you ! that’s the way with them. They are tricksters at heart, and conceal their feelings with a sort of savage deceit, which only a Red Indian besides possesses. See how calmly and placidly Miss Dissembler smiles with elegant ease, whilst Madame Verjuice pierces her little writhing heart through and through with a malicious sarcasm that wounds her to the core. She looks as if she never felt it whilst she is bleeding to death inwardly. Look at the poor fainting wife and mother, who with a smile on her lips and death at heart, cheerfully gives her husband and starving children the last morsel of bread in the hovel, and says with a martyr-like dissimulation that she does not want it, she is not hungry. Bless

you they are all deceivers, every one, from little miss in her teens, who flirts with her boy lovers, to old Joan of threescore, who still wheedles her venerable Darby !

“Why, Bertie, what on earth do you mean ?” as innocently as you please.

The Reverend Herbert Pringle, B.A., had for the last two days been puzzling his small amount of brains how to broach the subject to his sister. He did not wish to vex her, or hurt her feelings ; in fact, he did not know what to do, it was “such a delicate matter, you know, such a very delicate matter,” that he wished it were settled and done for, and off his hands. But still, all the same, he did not know how to begin.

“Well, humph !” clearing his throat portentously, “the fact is, Lizzie, you know all about it.”

"Really, Bertie," said Lizzie, laughing—oh! such a faint little laugh, "you are very enigmatical to-day."

"I'm not joking, Lizzie; it's a serious business, a very serious business. What is all this going on between you and Tom Hartshorne?"

Poor Lizzie's little defences of affected ignorance and nonchalance at once broke down, although she bravely struggled on to preserve her equanimity.

"I'm sure I've nothing to do with Mr. Hartshorne. What *do* you mean, Herbert? Pray explain yourself."

And the young lady drew herself up with a tremendous accession of dignity to the full height of her little figure.

Herbert Pringle was so disgusted with the dissimulation of the sex as evinced in the

instance of his sister that he felt himself nerved up and able to go on with the talk before him, so he plunged at once *in medias res*.

“ Here’s Lady Inskip been telling me—”

“ Oh ! I’ve got to thank *her* for interesting herself about me ! I am sure I am very much obliged to Lady Inskip !”

“ You need not interrupt me, Lizzie, and you need not get angry about Lady Inskip. She’s a most motherly woman, and she spoke very kindly to me about you. You see, Lizzie, it’s a very hard thing for a fellow to speak of. Of course I think girls ought to be allowed to mind their own affairs of this kind, and it seems rough on my part to interfere ; but, you see, as Lady Inskip very kindly observed, you’ve no mother to advise you, and consequently I must take her place.”



As he said this, the Reverend Herbert Pringle looked certainly as unlike a mother as possible.

"Go on, Herbert; let me know all that Lady Inskip has been kind enough to say of me," said Violet Eyes, now facing her brother, with a full sense of her dignity, and tapping her foot on the floor with angry impatience.

"Well, she told me that she saw you and Tom Hartshorne in the garden the other day as she drove by; and, though I see no harm in it, and fortunately no one but herself saw it, she said she was very much shocked, and that you acted as if you were engaged. Now, Lizzie, you know I'm very fond of you, and all that sort of thing, but people might talk, you know, and I want you to put a stop to it."

Lizzie's defences were entirely overthrown.

Her look of indignation faded off her face, to be replaced by a quick crimson blush, which as rapidly disappeared and left her features as pale as marble. She made a hurried step towards her brother, and fell sobbing on his neck.

"Oh! Bertie, Bertie!" she sobbed out, between a series of little gasps.

"There, there, don't cry! my darling little Lizzie. You know I did not mean to hurt you, my own little sister!" said Herbert, sympathisingly, patting her head as if he were saying "Poor dog! poor dog!" to a Newfoundland pup. And the subject was dropped, Lizzie thus gaining the victory in the end by having recourse to a woman's strongest safeguard—tears. For, as he told Lady Inskip afterwards, "when the waterworks were turned on he had to give in." The old

campaigner for her part, was very well satisfied that the topic had been mentioned: that was all she wanted.

Lizzie went to bed very early that night, pleading a headache, and really her face was so pale and the deep violet eyes were so sunk in her head with broad veins of black underneath them, that her assertion was freely borne out by her appearance.

The poor little heart was deeply troubled: the stricken deer was grievously wounded. She was very young, you must remember, and had fallen into that horrible abyss of love without knowing what she was doing. The temptation had been so sweet, the steps she had taken into that rose-coloured paradise so gradual, that she had not perceived the drift of their march, so that Tom's sudden act and manner had startled and frightened her ;

it was letting in the sunlight on one who has been blindfolded, and the little secret which she had hugged to her heart alarmed, while it gave her such sweet ecstasy.

Ever since that morning in the garden, only two days ago—two days! it seemed more like two years, she had been so much altered—Lizzie had not been the same. She had awakened from a long sleep as it were, and everything round her, every little inconsiderable item in her daily life bore a new charm to her or had a fresh meaning. A deeper and more beautiful light beamed now in her thoughtful eyes; there was a charming hesitancy in her manner in lieu of the former piquante pert way she had. In a word, Lizzie was our Lizzie still, but a hundred times more loveable and prettier from the new love light that encircled her.

She had been watching—eagerly watching, for her next meeting with Tom, and yet when she thought of him, blushed at her thoughts and trembled with a sly rapture. He was so noble—so manly—so handsome! Just in fact what most young girls think Corydon when in love.

It was no wonder, then, that the brother's lecture and the idea of the old campaigner's criticism on her conduct frightened our poor little maid.

She went up to her little bed tearfully and heavy-hearted, and thought of chains and dungeons, and all the malicious contrivances of the wicked for parting true lovers, and she sobbed herself to sleep. When she woke up in the morning she was still in the most restless and perturbed state that her little mind could be in. "How dared that odious old

thing speak about her, or look at her, or come round at all!" She would never see Tom again—and she was longing to see him all the time!

She would not go to the pic-nic—that she wouldn't!

Then she *would* go, because the aforesaid old odious thing would imagine that she took it to heart if she stopped away.

But she would *not* go because that impudent Master Tom would be there, she thought, with a rising blush and a conscious swelling of the tender little bosom underneath her muslin dress.

Of course she determined to go!

## CHAPTER XIV.

## THAT YOUNG IMP.

THE old campaigner's pic-nic had been decided upon by her, not only as a merry-making festival, but as a regular strategical *coup*.

She wanted to roll many issues into one, and like a prudent general, she conned her forces, surveyed their position, and considered her war *materiel*; all being in train, she

determined that as she wanted to create an impression in the neighbourhood, and bring sundry persons together without being compelled to go to any great expense, the best and most efficacious mode she could adopt for carrying out her plans would be to give a pic-nic.

In the first place she could ask all those people of the vicinity whom she did not care to specially invite to her own house ; in the second, as everyone would to some extent purvey their own refreshments, no great outlay would be required on her part ; and in the third place this sort of rustic excursion offers greater advantages and inducements for judicious love-making, and brings many bashful woers, such as young Clericus, to the scratch.

It was under these circumstances and acting



with these motives, that Lady Inskip had made preparations and issued invitations for a grand pic-nic to come off at Dingle Dell, which was a nice drive from Bigton, a few weeks after she came down to reside at that festive haunt.

She had by this time thoroughly explored all the capabilities of the place, and knew just whom to ask and whom to avoid. The old Indian officer, Captain Curry Cucumber, had of course an invitation, and so had Doctor Jolly and his sister, but Deborah said that she never went out to any such "gallivantings," and declined; the doctor, however, promised to pick them up in the course of the day after he had made some necessary calls on his patients.

The people were all to meet together at Laburnum Cottage, and drive from thence

*en cortège* to the Dingle, so an early hour was fixed for the rendezvous in order to have a good long day of it.

Soon after eleven, the time appointed, there was quite a goodly muster of vehicles in front of Lady Inskip's residence. Tom Hartshorne drove down in a bright new dog-cart, and being immediately pounced upon by the campaigner, was made or inveigled into taking Carry with him. Not that Tom objected personally to that young lady, who was very agreeable and naturally glib of tongue, but he sorely wished and had indeed planned that our little friend Lizzie should be his companion.

In order to prevent this the campaigner had specially called at the parsonage and taken Miss Lizzie in her own pony chaise with her: the Reverend Herbert and the languid Laura

completed the quartette. Tom sadly deplored the absence of Markworth, for he was so well used to the campaigner, and had such nerve and *sang froid* that he was capable of even turning her out of her own carriage. Lieutenant Harrowby and Captain Miles, too, of Tom's regiment, who had come over from Brighton that morning for the *fête*, and who hoped to have complete possession of the Inskip "girls," as military men usually dub the young ladies of families, did not seem satisfied with the arrangements for the procession; and as for Captain Curry Cucumber—who had arrived on the scene of action dressed in a new pair of nankeen trowsers and a solar hat, not to mention a blue coat with brass buttons and other portions of a perfectly gorgeous toilet—he was simply enraged at the want of deference

paid him by Lady Inskip, and had serious thoughts of turning back at first, although he afterwards suffered himself to be soothed over by Miss Blandish (spinster, *ætat* 45—60), and promised to remain with the company until at least “tiffin” should be over.

At last, however, all things were settled, and “barring” a few *contretemps* and heart-burnings the whole party started off in great spirit to drive towards Dingle Dell.

The road was a very pretty one, all through the romantic scenery to be found in the valley of the swift-running and widening river Biggle, at the mouth of which, as has been described in its proper place, the watering place of Bigton, formerly called Biggleton (*vide* County Archæology), was situated.

The day was fine—as fine as a bright August day can be in the country. *Ergo*

all went merry as the proverbial marriage bell. The only trouble Lady Inskip had was with her darling pride—that horrible boy, the young Sir Mortimer. He would insist on carrying a wretched old single-barrel gun with him for the purpose of shooting small birds when they got to the wood, and of course, as he always managed, he had his own way. “Such a darling boy,” as he was, “but so rash!” Mortimer persisted in practising along the road as they drove on, frightening the horses every now and then, and making everybody feel in terror for their lives.

It was no use that Lady Inskip called out in a half-entreating, half-commanding voice at intervals, “Oh! Morti—mer! Mortimer!” the young imp would continue his detonating sport, and everyone was heartily glad when

after passing the steep incline which led down from the old castle of archæological renown, they crossed the pretty rustic bridge over the Biggle, and arrived at length at Dingle Dell.

Considering that it was a good two hours' drive or more from Bigton, and that it was "getting on" in the afternoon, no one was averse to preparations being at once made for the substantial and real part of the pic-nic. All helped with good will to lay the cloth on the smooth green turf, and unpack the hampers. Even a smile irradiated the choleric and saffronised face of the Indian warrior, who was much disgusted when they sat down to the *al fresco* banquet that no one had remembered to bring mango, chutney, or Cayenne pepper, without which he assured Lady Inskip that even "the best victuals"

were not worth the salt that accompanied them.

The old campaigner very judiciously arranged the various members of her company around the tablecloth—one cannot exactly say table. She placed Tom by the side of Carry, at the extreme opposite end of the “board,” away from Lizzie, whom she quartered with the gallant lieutenant, Harrowby, by herself. Pringle, of course, was placed next Laura; and although Lady Inskip had been obliged to invite the Rev. Jabez Heavieman, of Bigton, for appearance’s sake, she took very good care that he should not run foul of our Ritualistic young incumbent, whom he regarded in much the same light as the devil is supposed to look upon holy water.

Everything passed off well, and Lady Inskip

was in estacies; Carry was apparently having it all her own way with Tom Hartshorne, and Pringle was most devoted to Laura. As for Lizzie, she was hopelessly put on one side, and the campaigner considered "that artful little minx" as done for and out of her way: nothing could be better.

The banquet was at length finished.

Young Sir Mortimer, having gorged himself sufficiently with cold chicken and green-gage tart, so that his face shone again, went off with his gun to shoot in the woods, much against the entreaties of his mother, who fervently implored him "take care, Mortimer, my darling boy, take great care!"

The others disposed themselves around; some lolling on the grass, others making a pretence of fishing in the adjacent river: Tom had wandered off somewhere—Lizzie had dis-



appeared; and our cheery Doctor Jolly, who had just arrived in time for the feast—"Bless my soul! madam," as he said, in explanation, "never miss the grub, my lady—never miss my grub,"—was enjoying a cigar along with the "military swells," as he called them.

When suddenly Lady Inskip's pride and hope, the boy Mortimer, dashed in amongst them with a scared face, yelling out at the top of his voice—

"Oh! ma, ma! I've shot and killed somebody!"

The consternation his advent created can be imagined.

"Oh! dear, Mortimer,—Mortimer! I told you so: I told you so!" said Lady Inskip, bursting into tears.

Carry went into hysterics, entreating every-

body to "hold me down! hold me down!" Laura fell fainting in the arms of the Reverend Pringle, who looked hopelessly bewildered. Miss Blandish, making an ineffectual and similar attempt to repose on the white waistcoat and nankeen trousers of Captain Curry Cucumber, was precipitated by a dexterous and skilful manoeuvre on the part of that gallant officer, into the salad-bowl, the Captain muttering horrible imprecations in Hindostanee, such as heaping curses on the beard of her departed father, and devoutly hoping that jackasses might sit on her grandmother's grave.

Doctor Jolly alone retained his composure, and darted off, as quickly as his size and gout would permit him, in the direction from which the young imp, Mortimer, had come.

What had happened?

"And you gave him the date of Susan's coming of age, eh!"

"Yes; I got it out of the family Bible. It was the 27th of August, I remember it well—just the day before they had the pic-nic—when he took Susan off."

"Humph! The 27th of August," said Mr. Trump, reflectively, as he looked over a little document he had before him, at first carelessly, but in a moment or two more eagerly. "The 27th of August, eh—that's strange!" He continued to pore upon the mass of papers on his desk, and then he suddenly seized a large, old-fashioned volume that also lay before him. "The twenty-seventh, eh? Then, by George, Miss Kingscott, I'm a born idiot! Hurrah!" he shouted, rising, and dashing the volume to the other end of the room, as if he were taken suddenly mad, and quite alarming the

them the other day! Then, too, the whole thing had bored her, and she wished she had never come! Lady Inskip also had been very snappish with her—even rude, she thought, and though Lizzie, with all her gentleness, was not “one to be put upon with impunity,” and could have held her own against the campaigner at any other time: still to-day she had quite lost her natural spirit, and did not try to turn aside a single shaft of the many hurled by her implacable foe.

Lizzie was sadly out of heart. Ramb-ling along, she at length came to a little open glade at some distance from where the pic-nickers were making merry.

Here, as she turned round the trunk of a gnarled old elm, all covered with ivy, which had previously obscured this open glade from her view, whom should she see, standing there

madam, and so is Sequence, and we'd better now shut up shop !”

“ And that will end the case at once ?”

“ Certainly, at once ; why, he's got no right to claim anything now, as he will know very shortly, from the very wording of the will.”

“ I'm glad of it; but I should have liked mine to have been the hand to work his ruin.”

“ Very sorry, I'm sure, for your sake, madam ; but you see we don't want your help now, although I should have been very glad to use it a minute or two ago ! I shall write to that vagabond at once. He gave me an address at an hotel the other day, and he said he would stop there until the trial came on, in case we wanted to compromise, which, I confess, I once did. But now, hurrah ! the rascal's done for without that. I shall be

whom he had murder in his heart, the gun, which was something like the Irishman's that could "shoot round a corner," never brought down anything.

At length he came to a dense thicket, just on the borders of the little open glade where Tom and Lizze were about to meet.

A particularly fine fat thrush, hopped on a twig in the midst of the thicket; and, as it was only about a yard from the muzzle of his gun, the young imp was more successful this time. He fired and brought down his bird; but he also brought down something else which he had not bargained for.

Tom was just advancing with outstretched hand towards Lizzie, glad of the opportunity for which he had been longing all day.

Whiz ! bang ! more than half the charge of

the young imp's shot struck him in the side, and Tom fell nearly senseless at Lizzie's feet.


She, forgetting all her reserve, bent over him in an agony of terror.

"Oh! Tom, Tom!" she cried, as she knelt down by his side, their faces nearly touching, and her hair sweeping across his cheek. "They have killed you! They have killed you!"

And the sun still shone down, and the fleecy clouds still sailed overhead, and the summer breeze rippled through the trees.

"Lizzie, my darling! I'm so happy: I wish I could die now," murmured Tom, in disconnected fragments, and he fainted away outright.

"Oh! he's dead! He's dead!" cried Lizzie, out aloud, wringing her hands, bursting into an agony of tears—tears, idle tears!



“Bless my soul!” said the doctor, bursting through the bushes, as he arrived very opportunely on the scene of action, out of breath with the haste he had made. “Bless my soul! Who’s dead, what’s dead? It’s all confounded nonsense,” he continued, excitedly, bending down over Tom, and tearing open his coat and shirt, and feeling his heart. “Bless my soul! He’s no more dead than you are, my dear! The man’s only fainted.”



## CHAPTER XV.

## END OF "FIRST ACT."

THE most powerful logic fails to supply one with any rules or data whereby to analyse the workings and application of motives. If we try within ourselves even to trace back a passing thought to its original cause and inception, we see how involved and erratic are its wanderings; and we are obliged to give up the hopeless quest from sheer inability to follow

its course. No wonder, therefore, that human motives are difficult to fathom; and although writers of fiction have the presumptive right to lay bare the inward mechanism which directs and guides their various characters, and are permitted to exemplify—hanging their theories and arguments on certain lay-figures more or less natural—how such and such a train of thought, and such and such a motive leads on and up to such and such an end; still, it is a very deceptive argument at the best, and these deductions, however plausible, are often grievously in fault. Motives are inscrutable. The slightest bias or hitch one way or the other will produce an altogether different result. Let us just imagine “what might have been” in the lives of our heroes and heroines if some new little incident had cropped up, or some detail

or phase been ever-so-little altered; and we cannot but agree, in the felicitous observation of one of our greatest authors and students of human nature, that the history of "great events that might have been" would far outweigh and be more deeply interesting than any history ever published of what *has* happened!



These remarks have been made with reference to the character of Clara Kingscott. She had been grossly deceived in the first instance by Markworth, brought about a good deal by herself, no doubt; but still she had been deceived and her reputation ruined. She then naturally hated the author of her misfortunes—for hate is closely akin to love—and yet with all her hate, the love that had first originated had not quite died out. She hated Markworth: she longed for revenge, she deter-

mined to be even with him; and yet at the same time, the greatest pang she could have suffered would have been to see him ruined, as she intended him to be by herself.

Thus it was partly from love—what a misapplication of the term!—partly from revenge that she had foiled his wealthy marriage in Paris; it was partly from love, partly from hate that she was now bent on assisting his marriage with Susan Hartshorne, if such a conflict of motives with actions can be imagined. She had entered into the compact with him to suit her own purpose of attaining her revenge: still when it came to the last it went to her heart, if she had one, to help him on to his end. She was his bond servant and his Nemesis as well; and the man's strong nature controlled the woman's equally strong nature merely by the force of former circum-

stances than by anything else. She was assisting in a plot she knew; but no feeling of self-consideration would have induced her to hold back now, or from exposing her participation in the conspiracy when she determined to stretch out her hand. She was bent on ruining him body and soul; and at the last moment when she had succeeded in achieving her purpose, she would be the first, the only one, perhaps, to weep over her own success, and allow the demon of Remorse to prey upon her vitals. But she must go on now : she had already received the "blood money!"

He, schemer as he was, and skilled as he dreamed himself to be in the secrets of men and women, did not understand one tithe of Clara Kingscott's nature. She had tried to entrap him once, and had found out too late that she herself was entrapped. Her first



proceeding against him resulted most probably, he thought, from a woman's spite and a woman's jealousy, but he had no doubt she had grown more sensible now, as she had grown older. She knew him of old, and was no match for him ; so, like a sensible woman, she accepted the part laid down for her, and acted Faust to his Mephistopheles. She was quite satisfied of course, for it suited her interests, and he thought besides that she had some lingering liking—like most women—for the man that had deceived her. She was a fine girl still, too, and if circumstances had been otherwise, and Susan Hartshorne and a fortune been in the way, he might have married her. Of course there would have been no such nonsense as "love" between them now. Yet she was a clever woman, and he and she would have got on together very well, and

have managed to pick up a very comfortable living out of the world. This was, probably, what Markworth did think occasionally, but events were hurrying him on, and he was fully prepared to take advantage of every circumstance to perfect his plot. It would be time enough to think of the future when he had hold of that nice little sum of money which was just within his grasp.

From what he had heard of the pic-nic he had determined that that day would be best suited for carrying out his purpose, and later events decided him upon the justice of his surmise. He found out that the old lady was going a long distance to collect some rents : she had laughed the idea to scorn of her attending the merry-making. Tom would, of course, be there, and it would be a strange thing if he and Miss Kingscott could not man-

age to get Susan—who would not be expected of course, to go to the pic-nic, even if she were asked—out of the house, and away without risking discovery.

Accordingly, finding everything suitable, Markworth wrote up to town on the Monday (when he was certain that the dowager would be away, and the coast clear for his purpose) to Joseph Begg, telling him he wanted him to meet a lady and himself at the Waterloo Terminus the next afternoon at two o'clock—at all events to be there from two to four; and as the lady was very timid Begg was to be respectably dressed as an honest old-fashioned old gentleman, for he would have to take charge of her. His letter was sent up in good time, made up as a parcel, and given in charge of the guard of the train, so it was delivered early that evening; and Markworth got an



answer the next morning, saying that his instructions would be carried out.

Just as Tom was ready to start to join the party at Lady Inskip's, Markworth held out an envelope to him, and said he was so sorry, but he would have to go up to town at once, and consequently could not join him to go for the pic-nic.

"Couldn't you put off the business," said Tom excitedly. "It's an awful shame! I wanted you to be there so much."

"Well, you see, Tom," said Markworth, speaking with a tone of deep regret pervading his words, "I'm sure I want to go with you, and have been thinking of it all the week. But lawyers, you know, won't be put off, and if I do not go to-day, why it will cost me a pretty penny I can tell you! I am more sorry than you are, old fellow; you will be in the

society of a nice pretty girl all day, while I shall be muddled up in law and parchment. By the way there's a train at eleven, isn't there?"

"Yes, but I'm infernally cut up about this; yet if you must go, of course you must. I'll drive you over to the station because you have not much time to lose to catch the train. Will you be back soon?"

"Well, I can't say; and as my time will be uncertain—you never know when legal business will be arranged—I think I had better take my traps with me. If I can, I'll be down again as soon as possible; but I may as well be prepared."

"Just as you please, old fellow!" answered Tom; and the friends presently drove off to the station in the nice looking dog-cart Tom had hired for going to the pic-nic, when he

hoped to have the opportunity of driving some one else after he got there.

They just caught the train, and Markworth jumped in, not having a moment to spare ; while Tom drove on to Bigton and the bright eyes that were expecting him.

At the next station, on the "up line," Markworth got out. He was not more than a couple of miles from Hartwood and The Poplars ; so, by twelve o'clock, the time he had previously agreed on with Miss Kingscott before leaving the house, he met her and Susan at a certain part of the road across the fields.

We must retrace our steps for a short time to explain matters. How strange it is, by the way, the manner in which events and incidents work out to suit one's plot? They do very often, too, in real life, as the perusal of any of our *causes célèbres* will show. That

unfortunate victim of the Mannings came punctually to eat of his roast goose, mindful that he was going to his doom, as we read in that famous murder case which startled everybody twenty years ago. I wonder if the circumstances of the crime originated the current idiom known as "cooking one's goose?"


The old lady, you see, went off very quietly, to be out of the way, and Miss Kingscott and Markworth had a splendid opportunity.

Susan was quite tractable, and would have done anything that Markworth told her. He said before leaving the house that she was to go for a walk with him; he did not tell her more at the time, and that she was to meet him with Miss Kingscott at the stile, across the fields. He also told her that she must dress nicely in something dark to please him,

and wear a veil; and of course she was delighted to obey him.

Miss Kingscott lent her a dark dress, shawl and bonnet, and having assisted her toilet, she was soon equipped. Altogether from her leaving off her old and favourite colours, the change in her appearance was so great that she looked totally unlike her former self, and even her own mother would hardly have recognised her with her piercing eyes, if she had met her out of doors.

The governess did not omit any little thing that would baulk the success of the enterprise. She studied every little detail, too, for she had her purpose to serve as well as Markworth. She was not going to jeopardise her prospects of gaining over the young squire, or in fascinating the doctor, by being mixed up in the



elopement in any way, so that her assistance should be brought home to her; and consequently for her own sake she had to avoid detection and recognition as well as her accomplice.

She sent off George to the neighbouring public-house "The Jolly Spades," with a shilling, to make himself glad, and render his nature even more comatose than usual on "home-brewed." George went off exultant, declaring that she "was a raal leddy, that she were," and that he would drink her health—so *he* was disposed of. The old lady was miles away, and so was Tom, too, at the picnic; the old woman servant was deep in the kitchen or somewhere else downstairs; and thus nobody saw Miss Kingscott leave the house with Susan. There was only herself to prove it.

They met Markworth at the stile; and Miss Kingscott, telling him briefly "I have kept my part of the compact," to which he as briefly replied "I will keep mine; you shall hear from me in a month," returned to the house. They had arranged matters previously, as we have seen.

Her entrance was as unobserved as her exit.

Susan was overjoyed at being out, and, above all, being out with Markworth—without even "that governess," whom she partially disliked—and away from the house and her mother.

It was quite a fairy holiday for her; and although she was now as reasoning a being as any of us, and had quite recovered her senses, she asked no questions: she left everything in Markworth's hands, as she looked up to him as a superior to whom every obedience was

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due, and who would do everything for the best. He led the way over the fields, Susan walking by his side like a child engrossed by her own happy thoughts, and the novelty of everything around her—it was a new world to her—towards the Bigglethorpe station, on the “up line;” this was where he had got out: it was above Hartwood, so nobody could recognise him.

“How would you like to be with me always, Susan? To go away and never come back to the old house again, and all its horrors.”

“Oh! that would be so happy if I were with you,” she said, in joy; “but my mother would never let me,” she continued, her tone changing to one of sadness.

“Suppose she knew nothing about it,



Susan? We won't tell her, and will go away now, and never come back."

"Can we? can we?" she exclaimed, with startling earnestness; "you are not laughing at me?"

"I mean it, Susan. You shall come with me now if you like. I will take you up to London and marry you, and then nobody can take you away. Will you come?"

"Will I?" she repeated with emotion; "I will go anywhere with you." And she clung to his arm with a child's touching trust.

They took the train at Bigglethorpe and in due time arrived at the Waterloo Station, where Mr. Begg, looking like a very respectable old gentleman, but small and spare, met them. Markworth introduced him as "his uncle," and they drove together to the

lodgings in Bloomsbury Street. On the way he led out Susan and made her converse with the ex-marker, who was much struck with her appearance, and her timid, hesitating way.

"Well, what do you think of her?" asked Markwick, when Susan had gone up stairs to take her things off, under the charge of the old landlady.

"What do I think, Mister Markworth? Well, I think you are put in luck's way. She's as pretty a young lady, and as ladylike a one as I ever seed."

"You don't see anything about her, do you?" he asked anxiously.

"Queer? not I; she's a bit nervous, in course, but I'd bet she's as sensible a lady as you or I."

"Thank you, Joe, good-day; I want you

to be here at ten o'clock to morrow morning. You must not be late; it will be my marriage day."

"Never fear, sir; I'll be here sharp ten," and the confederates separated—the marker to go back to his billiard-room, where he had left a friend watching over the interest of his pool table, and Markworth to think over the day and study his plans.

On the next morning, Wednesday, August 28th, 1867, Susan Hartshorne was married to Alleyne Markworth, at the church of St. Catherine's Cross the Less, Johnson's Lane, E.C., in the presence of Joseph Begg and the parish clerk, witnesses.

END OF VOL. I.

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T. O. Newby, 80, Welbeck Street, Cavendish Square, London.





had risked so much, than the veriest beggar whom he might pick out of the street. He would have to leave England at once, or his next step would be into a gaol, on account of his debts: the harpies would be upon him the moment his failure was known. What on earth to do with himself, or with the girl he called his wife, whom he had tackled himself to, he did not know. The first thing, however, was to get away, and that as soon as possible.

“ I suppose the suit will have to be dropped now, for I have no object in carrying it on. Good morning, gentlemen,” he said, to the lawyers ; “ I suppose you don’t want me any longer.”

And he walked out of the office as calmly as if he had achieved a victory, although all his hopes and plans were utterly wrecked.

"He's a plucky fellow, and deserved to win," said Mr. Trump to his partner, when Markworth had disappeared, and his steps were heard going down the staircase.

"That he is; that he did," responded parrot Sequence, and both dismissed him from their minds, and set about filing the necessary papers which would soon put an end to the longed talked of suit of "Markworth *versus* Hartshorne."

## CHAPTER XIV.

## THE DOCTOR GOES ABROAD.

"AIT-CHOO!" sneezed the doctor one morning towards the end of October, when the weather was getting damp and misty, as he entered his comfortable breakfast parlor, where Deborah was sitting as usual before the fire darning her interminable stockings. I believe if you walked into that room at any